



THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,283

TUESDAY 29 APRIL 1997

WEATHER: Sunny and breezy with showers (IR45P) 40p



INSIDE THE TABLOID
NETWORK+
THE MAN WHO'S
AFTER APPLE



INSIDE THE TABLOID
**INFERTILITY: WHAT
EVERY WOMAN
SHOULD KNOW**



NEWS PAGE 3
**THE LITERARY
TYPE
BUSINESS**

The Tory party gives up

Anthony Bevins
and Fran Abrams

The Conservative election campaign began to fray at the edges yesterday, with despair setting in, public displays of anger and the battle increasingly focused on a one-man fight being waged by John Major.

With only three days before polling day and all the polls suggesting a three-figure Labour majority, the Conservatives held no press conference, the party's big hitters were largely silent, and Brian Mawhinney, the chairman, sent out a message to constituencies saying there was still time left to win over "millions" of undecided voters.

That was not the message given by voters to *Independent* reporters yesterday. On visits to six marginal Tory constituencies, they found a distinct hardening of Labour support. In Stevenage, which is 37th on Labour's target list and a seat the party must win to have any hope of forming a government, many former Conservatives said they would vote Labour and praised a strong campaign by the party's candidate, Barbara Follett. In Redditch, which is 44th on the Labour list and where a win would still not give the party an overall Commons majority on a uniform national swing, several unhappy Conservative voters in a panel set up by *The Independent* have now swung to Labour, after vacillating throughout the campaign.

Even more optimistic for Labour, both Cleethorpes, which could give Labour a majority of more than 30, and Watford, which could mean a 50-plus majority, look likely to fall to Labour. The party also seems set to retain the seat of Tamworth, formerly South East

Staffordshire, which it won in a by-election last year.

Mr Blair said he took nothing for granted and deplored talk of landslides. Labour is keeping tight wraps round preparations for election night. However, the Royal Festival Hall has been booked for a massive party for workers and volunteers, with over 1,000

... but no one's told John Major



The Prime Minister on the stump yesterday

expected guests. Mr Blair is due to arrive there from his Sedgfield constituency at around 3.30am on Friday, by which time Labour might be assured of a majority government.

Mr Major last night completed a whistle-stop tour of the United Kingdom with an impromptu speech on Abingdon

Green, opposite the Commons, where he warned there were "seventy-two hours left to save the Union" from Labour policies on devolution and Europe.

The enthusiasm of the audience for his performance, staged to coincide with 6pm news bulletins, was explained by the fact that at least 90 of them were counted by *The Independent* returning to Conservative Central Office after it ended.

The Prime Minister's appearance at Westminster meant he could have appeared on the ITV 500 programme last night - Michael Heseltine stood in for him - and prompted Labour charges that he had "chickened out" of appearing before an audience of "real people".

When the charge was put to the Deputy Prime Minister he lost his temper in the television studio. Sue Lawley, hosting the programme, said that although Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown had made their appointments to appear, Mr Major had pulled out just a few days beforehand.

Mr Heseltine protested that Mr Major was in Northern Ireland and could not have announced the visit for security reasons. Hearing a member of the audience shout, "chicken!" Mr Heseltine said: "If you think the Prime Minister going to Northern Ireland is chicken, then you haven't the faintest idea what a brave and courageous man is about."

But the Tories were dogged during the day by what Mr Mawhinney told constituency chairmen amounted to no more than "groundless title-tattle" about disarray in Conservative Central Office and a leadership contest already running for the replacement of Mr Major.

Both Mr Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the



Going up in smoke: Kenneth Clarke in pensive mood yesterday at Blackpool after fending off questions on a leadership contest. Photograph: Jon Pilsten

Exchequer, were asked during this 'day about' their intentions for a leadership contest.

Pursued by the question in Blackpool, Mr Clarke said: "What you are talking about is not going to happen if we get it

right on Thursday." Ladbrokes reported heavy betting on Mr Heseltine as next leader, making him 7-2 co-favourite with Michael Portillo and Michael Howard. Peter Mandelson, Labour's campaign manager, said:

"Among the settling of scores and the internecine warfare, there's an awful lot of limbering up and auditions being carried out by would-be leadership challengers." The Liberal Democrat spokesman, Menzies

Campbell, told BBC radio's *World at One* programme: "If the Conservative Party embarks upon the kind of anti-European course to which it appears to be set, then I think there will be a substantial number of Conser-

vative MPs of the Que Nation variety who will find the issue of Europe too much for them, and will certainly be looking round to find another place, another party perhaps to which they should add their support."

Strange case of the diamond dealer and the £20,000 gifts

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

A millionaire diamond dealer who gave more than £20,000 to John Major's Conservative constituency association was later invited to go on a prestigious trade mission to Israel and Jordan with the Prime Minister.

According to correspondence leaked to *The Independent*, Willie Nagel, who also owned a lobbying company called Pynchon, attempted to interest Mr Major in an unmanned aircraft developed by Israel, even though there was an arms embargo for Israeli equipment at the time. Mr Nagel also lobbied him on a number of other matters before going on the trip in March 1995.

The revelations will reopen questions about Tory links with his business and the party's fundraising efforts which are a closely-guarded secret. Mr Nagel is one of only five official diamond brokers for De Beers, the South African

mining conglomerate, and claims to have extensive business connections throughout the European Union, Eastern Europe, Israel and the USA.

He was introduced in the early 1990s to Peter Brown, Mr Major's constituency agent, by Benjamin Perl, a friend of Mr Major's. Mr Perl runs a picture frame factory in the Prime Minister's Huntingdon constituency, but Mr Nagel has no connection with the constituency.

Mr Brown was taken to Wimbledon and sent various gifts including a magnum of champagne. They also met for lunch. According to a letter from Mr Brown, Mr Nagel then offered sponsorship of £10,000 for two local Tory party events following the 1992 election victory.

The subsequent invoice is for "advertising in brochures for at least two major functions in the year 1992 and to include regular political briefings and new bulletins". Such a formulation, means that the donations do not have to be revealed as political

contributions. At another lunch, Mr Nagel talked with Mr Brown about the Pioneer, an unmanned aircraft project by Israel Aircraft Industries.

He then wrote to Mr Major passing on the material and saying: "I'm not suggesting that any action could be taken upon this, but I wonder whether you might pass the information on to any department concerned with such equipment."

However, at the time - November 1992 - there was an arms embargo for equipment from Israel. After the embargo was lifted in May 1994, the Ministry of Defence did consider the Pioneer as an alternative to the Phoenix project which had been delayed by technical problems. A team of RAF officers was sent to Israel in 1995, but in October 1996 the MoD decided to stick with the Phoenix.

Mr Nagel also met Norma Major, who paid a visit to his Holborn office where she had lunch with his family and examined some of his diamonds.

However, his efforts to befriend Mr Major appear to have become unwelcome and a memo from Mr Brown to Mr Major in August 1994 raises the problem of how to deal with the "persistence" of Mr Nagel, who at one point is accused of being a "telephone trespasser" because he called the Prime Minister at home.

He had tried to alert Mr Major to the fact that the new managing director of Marks & Spencer, Andrew Stone, had tried to arrange a private lunch between himself and Tony Blair.

However, relations appeared to have been repaired because Mr Major invited Mr Nagel to go on the trade mission to Israel in March 1995.

Mr Nagel did not return *The Independent's* calls and last night.

A spokesman for Conservative Central Office said: "I very much doubt the Prime Minister knew about who was going on the trip. The list was put together by the DTI and No 10."



A model of the fountain of antimatter that US scientists have found pouring out of the Milky Way

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

When antimatter and matter meet, they annihilate each other utterly in a blaze of light. Now it seems the same can happen when American astronomers' claims reach the ears of rivals on this side of the Atlantic: after a brief burst, the two cancel each other out.

Yesterday, a team from the US space agency announced that they had found a "fountain of antimatter" pouring out of the centre of our galaxy, the Milky Way. According to the team, the "fountain" consisted of positrons - positively-charged electrons, the "antiparticle" of the standard electron - which might be produced by the super-

massive black hole known to lurk at the galaxy's middle, 25,000 light years away.

When a positron meets another electron, the two particles destroy each other and give off a burst of gamma rays. The NASA work followed a detailed mapping effort aimed at the source of gamma rays in the centre of the galaxy.

"The origin of this new and unexpected source of antimatter is a mystery," said William Purcell, assistant professor of physics and astronomy at Northwestern University.

Which sounded fine except that Sir Martin Rees, the British Astronomer Royal, reckoned that, strictly speaking, not only was this not antimatter, but it wasn't a mystery where it came from.

"I don't think it's wildly exciting," Sir Martin said yesterday. "They haven't actually found evidence of antiprotons [the antimatter equivalent of the proton] - just positrons. They're everywhere: they can be produced by the decay of radioactive elements in the leftovers of a supernova. What they really haven't found is antimatter, because there aren't any antiprotons."

If there were large amounts of antimatter atoms in our galaxy it would be very surprising, because of its readiness to react with - and destroy - normal matter. The vast majority of the universe is believed to consist of normal matter, though scientists believe that there may be whole galaxies consisting entirely of antimatter. So far, though, NASA has not found any.

THE BROADSHEET	
Business & City	21-25
Comment	17-19
Election '97	8-12
Foreign News	14-16

Home News	2-7
Leaders & Letters	17
Obituaries	20
Shares	24
Sport	29-32

THE TABLOID	
Arts	6,7
Arts Reviews	11
Crossword	14
Culture	2,3

Health	8
Listings	12,13
Radio & TV	15,16
Weather	14
Visual Arts	4,5



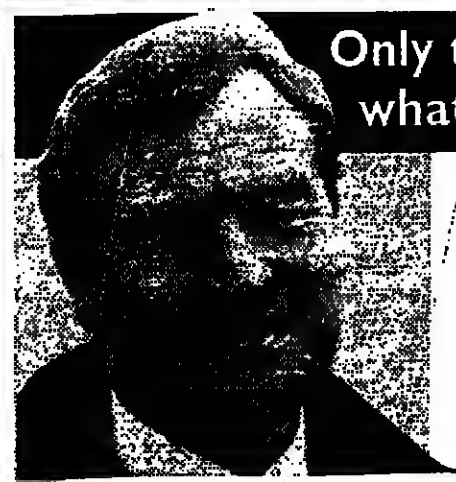
QUICKLY

Zaire pressure

The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, yesterday turned up the pressure on the leader of the rebel movement in Zaire, Laurent Kabila, to co-

operate in repatriating tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees believed lost in the east of the country in conditions of appalling exhaustion and deprivation.

Page 14



Only the LIBERAL DEMOCRATS say what Britain needs, what it will cost and where the money will come from.

Invest in Education - cutting class sizes, giving schools more books and equipment and giving all 3 and 4 year olds quality nursery education. The investment of £2 billion per year will be paid for by putting an extra penny in the pound on income tax. Together with our other tax proposals, this will mean a net increase of 45p per week to the average tax payer.

Safeguard our NHS - cutting waiting lists,

employing more doctors and nurses, restoring free eye tests and dental check ups. The cost of £550 million per year will be paid for by adding 5p to a packet of cigarettes and closing tax loopholes. Tackle crime - putting 3,000 more police on the beat. The cost of £60 million will be paid for by cutting wasteful Government spending on advertising and management consultants.



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

John 1:10 1:50

significant shorts

BA awaits verdict on terror threat protest

A French court will rule today whether British Airways was within its rights to refuse, for security reasons to operate check-in desks at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport next to those of the Algerian national airline.

BA operations at the main French airport have been severely disrupted since Saturday because the airline has closed its check-ins during the busiest part of the day. Passengers with more than hand luggage have been advised by BA to switch to other airlines, or take the train. Alternatively, BA has been inviting them to fly without their luggage, which is delivered to their homes the next day.

Following a number of bomb attacks in France connected to the Algerian civil war, British Airways claims that the presence of Air Algerie in the neighbouring check-in desks greatly increases the threat of its passengers or staff being injured in a terrorist attack. The Algerian air line resumed flights from Charles de Gaulle airport on Friday, after a two year break. **John Lichfield - Paris**

BBC settles Barclay libel battle

The BBC has settled a long-running legal battle with the reclusive newspaper and property millionaire David and Frederick Barclay.

The BBC and *Observer* journalist John Sweeney apologised in the High Court yesterday to the brothers - owners of the *Scotsman* and *European* newspapers and the Ritz hotel - and paid just under £15,000 to the brothers' favourite charity for a libel committed on BBC Radio Guernsey.

The brothers have pursued the BBC and Mr Sweeney, who presented the programme about them, through the French courts for both libel and breach of privacy as well as complaining to the Broadcasting Standards Council in the UK. The apology and payment is in settlement of both UK and French legal actions, and the broadcasting standards complaint, which has only so far been heard in part, will be dropped by the brothers. **Paul McCann**

Singer fined over street fracas

Rap and soul singer Mark Morrison was yesterday fined £750 for threatening behaviour and told that with "fame comes a responsibility to behave". Leicester magistrates were told that the 24-year-old singer - who has had several Top 10 hits, including "Return of the Mack" - was arrested after an early morning fracas in the city centre during the Easter weekend.



Morrison, (left) of Notting Hill, west London, was told by the chairman of the bench: "This is not the first time and it is quite clear that if you continue then there is a likelihood that you will ruin your career and your own future. With fame comes a responsibility to behave in a proper manner, not only for yourself but for those youngsters who look up to you."

Digital radio plans unveiled

Britain will receive over 30 digital radio services by 1999 after the Radio Authority confirmed yesterday that it will start advertising 20 digital commercial licences next spring.

In a letter to the Commercial Radio Companies Association, the authority has promised a "fast-track" approach to bring dozens of new digital services on-air at the same time. Home-owners will need digital radios to receive the stations which will also carry small "TV" screens for text and data services - so far only prototype digital receivers are available but commercially priced digital radios will be launched later this year. Britain's three national commercial stations, Virgin, Talk and Classic FM, will all be offered guaranteed places on the radio multiplex. The BBC has been digitally broadcasting its five national stations and dedicated parliament and sports services since 1995. **Paul McCann**

Care costs ruling upheld

A council's right to sell a person's home in order to claw back nursing home fees was upheld in the High Court yesterday.

Despite the fact that David Harcombe had returned from Australia to care for his 84-year-old mother, the judge ruled that councils had a wide discretion to impose such charges "to ensure residents with assets are not maintained at public expense". Mrs Harcombe had wanted to leave her house to her children, including Mr Harcombe who lives there, but now much of the money from its sale will have to pay off the residential home fees. Local authorities must disregard the value of a property where a spouse or a relative who is either under 16, over 60 or disabled lives. But she is allowed to use their discretion in other cases. **Glenda Cooper**

Why gardeners can discount drought

A water company is offering gardeners cash discounts on drought-resistant plants in a bid to save resources this summer. Severn Trent Water is linking up with 60 garden centres in the Midlands to offer a 10 per cent discount throughout the season. Gardeners will be able to purchase lavender, wallflowers and salvias as well as watering cans, water butts and compost bins at special prices.

people



Money talks: Deborah Banks, whose case could help 200 million women (Photograph: KNP)

Check-out worker begins mother of all pay battles

Deborah Banks began a battle yesterday which could cost employers millions of pounds and affect up to two million British women who work in low-paid and part-time jobs.

The 25-year-old former supermarket check-out worker has gone to an industrial tribunal in pursuit of a claim for £700 missed maternity pay. She is pursuing her claim against Tesco and Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security, after she was denied the money because her salary was £1 too low.

If her case is successful it could lead to a change in the law, which would force employers to pay millions in extra maternity pay for women whose salaries are below the level necessary to require national insurance contributions. Even if the case is not won at the tribunal, the charity Maternity Alliance, which is backing Mrs Banks, has said it will take the fight through the appeal courts and on to the European Court.

Mrs Banks used to work 15 hours a week for her local Tesco in Gillingham, Kent, and earned £55.93, just £1 less on average than the low pay limit. She left the store on maternity leave in December 1994 when she was pregnant with her second child but she had not earned enough to qualify for payment of Statutory Maternity Pay, leaving her with no income.

She said yesterday that she wanted to prevent other women being caught in a low-pay trap. "I am not doing this for me. I am doing it for the thousands of women out there who do not get maternity pay because they do not earn enough." Apart from losing maternity pay, Mrs Banks was also ineligible for income support because her husband was in full-time employment.

The legal action is being brought under the Equal Pay Act, which is supposed to guarantee equal rights for women working in the same jobs as men. Campaigners say the vast majority of the approximately 50 per cent of Tesco's employees who are not earning enough to pay national insurance contributions are women.

Simon Reeve

English Patient in the best of health

Hot on the heels of his triumph at the Oscars, film director Anthony Minghella is set to step back into the limelight at tonight's Bafta awards ceremony with *The English Patient* tipped to sweep all before it.

The film - which won nine Oscars - received a record 13 Bafta nominations and has already garnered three of a possible seven awards in the craft section a few weeks ago, for music, cinematography and editing. The six remaining nominations are for best film, direction, adapted screenplay, leading actor and actress and supporting actress.

Many of the film categories at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards offer the chance of a consolation prize to those talents overlooked in Hollywood like *English Patient* star Kristin Scott Thomas (pictured), Hollywood veteran Lauren Bacall and Mike Leigh's *Secrets And Lies*, which received no Oscars despite five nominations.

The ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall, highlight of Britain's showbusiness awards calendar, also offers recognition of the best



in television. Top programmes in the running for the television prizes include *Only Fools And Horses* and *Hillsborough*.

The Mrs Merton Show has two nominations and Rory Bremner, *Who Else?* has three, as does acclaimed BBC2 drama *Crucial Moments*.

News, sport, factual and talk shows also get their chance of awards.

The ceremony - which will be attended by the Princess Royal, president of Bafta - will be hosted by Lenny Henry and screened on BBC1 at 10pm.

Boy with one arm wins professional football signing

A teenager born with one arm is set for a career in professional football after signing for his local club.

Chris Perrior, 15, formally joined Second Division Walsall FC when he signed schoolboy forms in front of almost 6,000 fans before Saturday's home game against Brentford.

The midfielder was invited to join the Saddlers school of excellence after scouts spotted him playing for the Walsall Schools representative side.

Chris, of Bechdale, Walsall, who was born with his right arm finishing just below the elbow, said: "All the lads I play against just treat me as normal, and it has never caused me a problem."

Walsall's liaison officer, Bill Jones, said: "He's a very good player - we wouldn't have taken him on unless we thought he had a chance of making it."

"Although he has this disability, he does everything for himself and he's not embarrassed by his disability at all. He's very quick, gets good crosses in and he can also defend."

briefing

MEDIA

C5 gets a poor reception from target audience

More than a third of Channel 5's target audience has been disappointed by the new channel's programmes, and almost 40 per cent think they are the worst shown on British terrestrial television.

Among 15- to 24-year-olds - Channel 5's core target audience - 35 per cent believe the channel is worse than they expected and 38 per cent think it is the worst terrestrial channel on air. Among the population as a whole, 21 per cent think C5 shows the poorest programmes of any broadcaster, according to a survey of 500 people for CIA MediaLab, the media analysts.

Part of the channel's problem continues to be poor reception. The survey found that only 43 per cent of respondents get a moderate or good picture while 53 per cent say they get either a poor picture or no picture at all. **Paul McCann**

CRIME

Nigerians top UK's fraud league

West African criminals are responsible for almost half of all frauds carried out in the United Kingdom, claims a police report.

The National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) estimates that Nigerians and Ghanaians swindle £3.5bn from individuals, businesses and the Government, out of annual frauds totalling £8bn. West African frauds are a "significant concern" for police forces and governments around the world, an NCIS spokeswoman said. Among the swindles are: offering non-existent cargo at a discount, with payment up-front (one man lost £250,000); multiple claims for welfare benefits, using up to 25 false names and addresses; and passing off "damaged" banknotes which prove to be fakes.

ENVIRONMENT

Putting the love into litterbug



Tidyman, the ubiquitous 'Keep Britain Tidy' logo on packaging and litter bins, is getting a love life and an aggressive personality in a new advertising campaign aimed at Britain's messiest group - teenage boys.

In the series of advertisements, by the Poulter agency, an animated Tidyman will appear on television and cinema screens grabbing a silhouette boy who drops rubbish, and dumping him in a litter bin. Tidyman then makes off with the messy silhouette's girlfriend, to the line: "Use a bin. It beats getting your bird nicked by a logo."

The Tidy Britain Group, the charity behind Tidyman, found that in 1995, 661 out of 723 littering offences recorded by the police were committed by males, most of whom were teenagers.

CONSUMER TRENDS

Shoppers take to streets at night

In less than a decade nearly a third of trips to the doctor, hairdresser or dentist will be made in the evening, according to a new report.

And, by the year 2005, 30 per cent of our "personal-business travel" - visits to places such as the dry-cleaners - will take place between 5pm and 10pm, compared with 17.4 per cent today. In 1985 to 1986, 6.4 per cent of shopping trips took place between 6 and 10pm. By last year it had increased to 9 per cent and is expected to be 15 per cent by 2006. "Convenience is king," said Leon Kreitzman of the Future Foundation, the analysts who produced the interim findings of the 24 Hour Society report for BT and First Direct. "A real demand for the 24-hour society is growing." **Glenda Cooper**

TRANSPORT

Sting in the tailback over new jobs

An expected "explosion" of 150,000 new jobs in London in the run-up to the millennium will pose a serious challenge to the capital's transport system, a new report warned yesterday.

The work would be created in information technology, telecommunications, finance and business services, said the London Chamber of Commerce study. "These figures are wonderful news, but there is a sting in the tail," Simon Sperry, chief executive of the organisation, said. "By the year 2000, London Underground will be near breaking point... and London's roads will be approaching gridlock. This is insanity."

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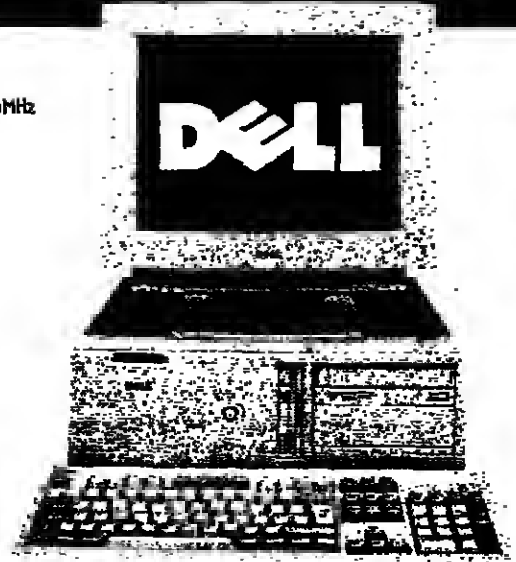
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Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

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news

Deputy attacks Grade in battle for C4 control

Rob Brown
Media Editor

The battle to succeed Michael Grade at Channel 4 took a new twist yesterday in reports that the highly respected internal candidate, John Willis, the director of programmes, had launched a scathing personal attack on his outgoing boss.

It was claimed by sources close to Mr Willis, who is Mr Grade's deputy, that he had decided it was time to emerge from the shadow of his more flamboyant boss to smash the "myth of Michael Grade" when he was interviewed for the post last week.

The source claimed Mr Willis showed a new ruthless side last Tuesday when he outlined his "Manifesto for Four" to the trio of directors charged with finding a new chief executive for Channel 4: the company's chairman Sir Michael Bishop, former Granada chief David Plowright and Dr Mary McAleese, professor of law at Queen's University, Belfast.

The panel was taken aback to be told that Mr Grade may have been a great front man for Channel 4, but he had not attended a scheduling meeting for three years.

Mr Willis, the son of Lord Willis, the creator of *Dixon of Dock Green*, has been described as the unsung hero of Channel 4 by Channel 5's Chief Executive, David Elstein.

He enjoys wide respect in the television industry. But he and his supporters must have been alarmed by press speculation at the weekend suggesting that

‘We are all amazed by this nonsense, frankly’

Michael Jackson, one of the BBC's top television executives, was emerging as the clear favourite to capture what he and many others have described as the best job in broadcasting.

The story emanated in an *Evening Standard* report allegedly originating from pro-Willis delegates from the channel's comedy and entertainment department.

In London, at Channel 4's

headquarters, the broadcaster's press office did its best last night to dampen down spin-doctoring for different candidates.

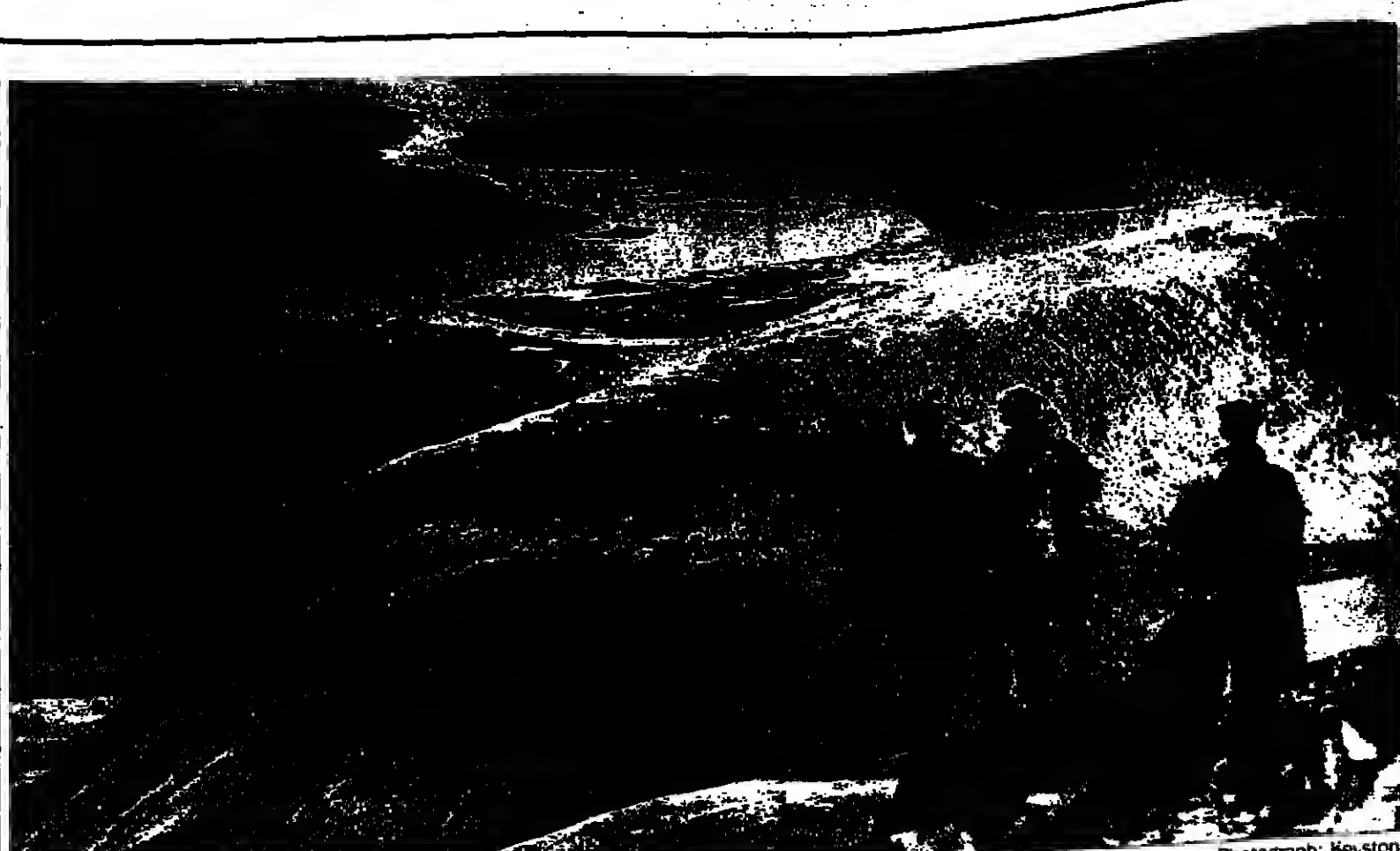
A spokesman said: "We are all amazed by this nonsense frankly, not least those who attended the meeting in which John Willis is alleged to have launched his attack."

Mr Willis, who is 50, has had a quiet image in the television industry until now.

Those putting the case for Michael Jackson and John Willis contend that creative leadership is what is required and commercial acumen can be supplied by David Scott, who was promoted from director of finance to managing director of Channel 4 shortly before Michael Grade announced he was leaving.

Yet the possibility of privatisation will continue to haunt the station even - or perhaps especially - if Labour wins the general election on Thursday.

If the incoming government does decide to raise some revenue for the Treasury by selling off a TV company, the Channel 4's board would almost certainly want a leading business figure to lead it into a cut-throat commercial future.



Rise and shine: Climbers, here going for a fastest ascent record in 1936, are being asked to pay for Ben Nevis's upkeep Photograph: Keystone

View from Ben Nevis comes at a price

Simon Reeve

Groups of walkers who wheeze and groan their way up Ben Nevis, the nation's highest mountain, are to be invited to pay for the privilege.

After local concern at the number of extra rangers required to direct competitors at walking and charity events, and the amount of litter they generate, local councils have decided to ask for donations from larger charity groups who "descend" on Ben

Nevis as part of a Three Peaks challenge (the other mountains being Snowdon and Scafell).

According to an internal report by John MacDonald, the Cultural & Leisure Services Manager for the Highland Council, the effects of large groups on the local environment and facilities "can often be very serious."

"Managing these groups can involve the council in additional costs due to staff time, additional litter clearing, hire of skips, extra toilet

cleaning, etc," he wrote. After a meeting yesterday, however, members of the Lochaber Council's Cultural and Leisure Services Committee unanimously agreed not to impose a charge on walkers, for example through the use of turnstiles or pay-booths.

"It is a basic tenet of faith in Highland life that access to the land is free and that is an inalienable principle," said Peter Peacock, the Highland Council Convener. But, according to Councillor and commit-

tee chair, Neil Clark, the congestion can get serious: "Believe it or not, we have experience of as many as two thousand people suddenly descending on Glen Nevis, sometimes in the dead of night, and then heading up the Ben."

Even if the council do try to impose or invite payment, however, it will be virtually impossible for them to regulate any levy, as the council does not actually own either Ben Nevis or access to it.

Loyalists fail to blow up Sinn Fein office

David McKittrick,
Ireland correspondent

An attempt by loyalist terrorists to blow up Sinn Fein's offices in West Belfast with a large bomb failed yesterday when the device failed to explode.

The attack coincided with John Major's visit to Belfast but did not appear to be linked to it.

The bomb was left in a stolen car outside the Sinn Fein offices on the Falls Road, at a spot which is close to many houses. Army experts dealt with the device using two controlled explosions, and police said later it contained 50 kilograms of home-made explosives, a booster charge and detonating mechanism.

Roy Dunne, a Royal Ulster Constabulary Chief Inspector, said that only the professionalism and expertise of the bomb disposal officers had prevented serious injury and damage.

The period of the general election campaign has seen a sharp reduction in violence from both republican and loyalist terrorist sources, but this attack has obviously revived fears that the relative calm could be shattered.

Loyalist sources and others have said that extreme Protestant groups might well retaliate for the IRA gun attack which seriously injured a policewoman in Derry several weeks ago, but the loyalists have since been almost eerily quiet.

The pattern of recent months has been for loyalists to react with what one source characterised as "measured retaliation" for acts of IRA violence.

It is not known whether yesterday's failed attack means they will consider hoover to be satisfied, or whether they will attempt to strike again.

But coming as close to polling day as it has, inevitably means that security at polling

stations will be reviewed. Sinn Fein election candidate Gerry Kelly accused the Prime Minister of ignoring the incident. He said: "It is notable that on the day Mr Major visits Belfast he is silent about this incident. This attack was carried out by loyalists who hope no blame will be attached to them because they did not claim it."

Meanwhile, a prison warder was released unharmed after being held hostage for more than four hours at Maghaberry prison near Lisburn, Co Antrim. He was grabbed by two prisoners who brandished what appeared to be two firearms and held him in a cell.

Later the men voluntarily gave up their weapons and surrendered, and were transferred to a segregated unit in the jail. They were said to have connections with a minor republican organisation, the Irish National Liberation Army.

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'Why was my granddaughter refused a transplant when soccer star got two?'

Girl who took ecstasy tablet died after being refused a new liver by doctors

Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

The grandmother of a teenager who died after being denied a liver transplant yesterday challenged the right of a famous Scottish footballer to have two such operations when her own granddaughter had been refused one.

Margaret Pirie, 56, a former auxiliary nurse, told a fatal accident inquiry she had become angry when told by doctors at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary that her granddaughter, Michelle Paul, would not receive a new liver in the transplant unit. Michelle, 15, was admitted with liver failure and died 23 days after taking half an ecstasy tablet at a rave near her home in Aberdeen.

Mrs Pirie said she had asked one of the members of the medical team at the unit, Dr Niall Finlayson, why former Rangers and Scotland soccer star Jim Baxter, whom she described as an "ex-alcoholic football player", had been entitled to two liver transplants.

She claimed that Dr Finlayson told her the decision not to give her granddaughter a transplant had been made on moral grounds by the senior member of the team, Dr Hilary Sanfey.

Mrs Pirie said the moral grounds on which the decision had been made were related to Michelle's mother Carolann's background - she is a self-confessed former drug addict - and Michelle's admission that she took ecstasy.

However, when she met Dr Sanfey herself, the surgeon just kept saying that Michelle was medically unfit for a transplant, Mrs Pirie told the inquiry at Aberdeen Sheriff Court.

She accused Dr Sanfey of wriggling out of answering questions about whether the decision not to go ahead with the operation had been made on moral grounds.



Dr Hilary Sanfey (left), who was alleged to have said the transplant refusal was made on moral grounds. The soccer star, Jim Baxter (right) received two transplants

ation had been made on moral grounds.

"As I see it, we were just not worth bothering with. That was the impression I got," she said.

Michelle's death came a week after Leah Betts, from Essex, died when she took an ecstasy tablet at her 18th birthday party.

As I see it, we were just not worth bothering with. That was the impression that I got

Mrs Pirie said that she had confronted Dr Sanfey a few days later in the hospital corridor as her granddaughter was dying.

"She asked me what was wrong," said Mrs Pirie. "I said that Michelle was going to die today."

She claimed that Dr Sanfey had told her that she would never understand, to which Mrs Pirie replied: "I said go, I never will understand, and I just

her or her daughter Carolann to enquire whether Michelle would be given proper support after a transplant.

She claimed that she, her husband and her daughter would have given Michelle proper support and would have endeavoured to keep her from taking drugs.

Dr John Douglas, 47, a consultant in the hospital's infection unit, said Michelle's death from liver failure caused by taking co-

stasy may have been the first case of its kind in the world. At that time there had only been seven reported cases of ecstasy causing hepatitis, but none of liver failure.

Only after Michelle's death had cases of liver failure from ecstasy been reported. Marie Paul, 18, told the court that she had known her sister had taken ecstasy even though she had not found out directly from Michelle.

While Michelle was in hospital in Aberdeen, before she was transferred to Edinburgh, Ms Paul had telephoned the police because she feared someone had given her sister drugs on the ward.

Later, one of the junior doctors on the ward, Margaret McCartney, 25, said she had also suspected Michelle had been given drugs shortly before her condition deteriorated dramatically. However, the court heard that Dr McCartney had examined her and found her "neurologically to be completely intact".

Tests later revealed no trace of drugs other than cannabis. The inquiry, before Sheriff Graeme Warner, continues.



Michelle Paul, who was refused a liver transplant after taking an ecstasy tablet

Wanted: berth for a new nautical language

Britannia may no longer rule the waves, but English lingers on as the maritime language, or at least it did.

With the demise of British seamen, whose numbers have fallen from 70,000 to 30,000 in the last decade alone, there has been an influx of foreign mariners from south-east Asia and Eastern Europe who do not speak English.

Now the European Union is putting £200,000 into a research project which is designed to come up with a single working language, probably based on English, and which all seamen can understand.

The influx of foreign languages has created tensions among the crews on ships where there may now be up to 30 different languages spoken.

There have also been mix-ups and misunderstandings which have led to accidents and deaths.

Incidents have included the desperate search for a Chinese waiter in Wales who spoke the same language as the crew of a salvage tug that was in Milford Haven when the *Sea Empress* ran aground.

As part of the work, researchers from the University of Wales, in Cardiff, are using tape recorders to capture the communications, or the lack of them, on the bridges of selected ships, where there may be a British or a Dutch captain, a Filipino chief officer, a Chinese second mate and an African third officer, all working alongside each other.

"Gradual evolution has changed the composition of seafarers, and they are now predominantly from countries where English is not the first language," said Professor Abigail Cooper who is co-ordinating the research.

"They can have different versions of English too, and the same words can have different meanings. You can get all kinds of problems and many tensions and anxieties," he said.

The team are looking at the extent of language diversity, the use of sign language, and are compiling a report on those accidents where communication problems may have been involved.

"The problem has been highlighted by a number of incidents, including the *Sea Empress* disaster," Professor Cooper said.

"Language was a major factor, for example, in the fire on board a Baltic ferry where 100 people died."

The opportunities for misunderstandings are very great and a lot of casualties have taken place as a consequence," he said.

As well as producing a pilot syllabus for the teaching of maritime English and guidelines for avoiding misunderstandings, the researchers also intend to come up with methods of managing what are described as cross-cultural tensions.

Hogg dismisses concern over BSE risk to dogs

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The Government was insisting last night that scientific evidence gathered six years ago, which suggests that dogs can develop "mad cow disease", was not followed up or published because it was not important.

Yet in an apparently contradictory letter, sent to the League Against Cruel Sports last July, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Maff) said that "research is in progress" to see whether dogs had genetic differences that might help them resist BSE infection.

As reported yesterday exclusively in *The Independent*, tests in 1991 on the brains of 444 hunting dogs by the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL) in Weybridge, Surrey, found traces of a change in brain chemistry associated with bovine spon-

form encephalopathy (BSE) and scrapie, the equivalent disease of sheep. Nineteen of the brains were affected.

The CVL is now conducting a post-mortem examination on an 11-year-old Norwegian dog which is thought to have died of BSE. The results are expected to be sent to Norway later this week.

But Maff said yesterday that the results of the 1991 tests had been inconclusive in showing

whether the dogs had definitely contracted the disease. The brains showed "scrapie-associated fibrils" (Safs) rather than the "spongy" holes of advanced BSE or scrapie.

Dr Stephen Dealler, an independent critic of Maff, said: "Safs are always indicative of a spongiform encephalopathy - like BSE or scrapie. They are the first step before the holes in the brain turn up."

"If the animal dies of another

disease in the meantime, it will have the Safs but not the spongiform holes."

The Minister of Agriculture, Douglas Hogg, insisted that there was no need for concern over the reports.

He said their disclosure "adds nothing to human knowledge", during a tour of North-east England which included a visit to a sausage factory in the marginal Stockton South constituency.

However, it emerged that the CVL did not carry out the logical follow-up experiment. This would have been to inoculate extracts from the dead animals' brains into laboratory animals such as mice, to see if they then developed a BSE-like disease.

But it was done with other animals to confirm the presence of BSE. Nor was the work published, although at the time it would

have been an important pointer which researchers from around the world could have examined and used to confirm that dogs do not catch BSE - or scrapie.

A Maff spokesman said yesterday that this was because "we decided to concentrate our work into more important areas such as BSE and its relationship with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the human equivalent of BSE".

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Stay of execution for the Quantock staghunt

Nicholas Schoon

The Quantock Staghounds may be able to overcome the threat to the hunt's survival which a National Trust ban on their sport threatens. They are expected to approach a neighbouring stag hunt to ask if they can use some of their terrain to hunt over.

Yesterday the Quantock Staghounds, which chase red deer on horseback with a pack of dogs, held what bloodsport opponents had hoped would be their last meet. The hunt relies heavily on using Trust land and this month the Trust's ruling council decided not to renew its licence when it expires at the end of April.

But the neighbouring Devon and Somerset Staghounds, which will suffer less from the Trust's decision to ban stag hunting on its property, said it would consider any request from the Quantock to use some of its traditional hunting grounds sympathetically. "I'm sure that will be discussed, although there's been no approach as yet," said Tim Yandle, joint master of the Devon and Somerset. "We would help them if we could."

Stag hunting on the Quantock Hills in Somerset has a 500-year history, although the Quantock Staghounds is only 90 years old. By tradition the hunting season for red deer closes at the end of April and reopens in early autumn.

Before the Quantock huntsmen and their hounds rode yesterday from the village of West Bagborough to a chorus of cheering supporters, hunt master Bill Fewings said: "It is very, very sad. It is heartbreaking." The Trust had still not spoken to the hunt about its decision, he added.

All four deerhunts in Britain - three in the West Country, one in the New Forest - use some National Trust land but the Quantock is by far the worst affected.

Its "country" covers a relatively small area, and much of the best hunting land, 1,037 acres, is in Trust ownership.



Scent packing: Hounds ready for the last formal outing of the Quantock hunt, which has been banned from National Trust land. But a neighbouring hunt may offer use of its property. Photograph: PA

Accused home director had not read care guidelines



Angela Rowe: 'Husband was responsible for the business'

Louise Jury

A director of a residential home accused of ill-treating mentally handicapped patients had never read the principal guidelines governing their care, a court was told yesterday.

Angela Rowe, 39, said she had never seen a copy of "Home Life", the national social services regulations which laid down appropriate ways of dealing with such people.

Mrs Rowe denies two counts of ill-treating residents and a further two charges of wilfully neglecting residents in homes she ran with her late husband, Gordon, in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, under the name Longcare Limited between 1983 and 1993. He committed suicide last year before he could be charged with similar offences. Mrs Rowe told Kingston Crown Court in Surrey that her husband had been responsible for handling the business of the homes, Stoke Place Mansion House and Stoke Green House.

Wife of suicide victim boss tells court she was sleeping partner

and had put her name on a registration document without her knowledge. But Jonathan Caplan QC, cross-examining her, suggested she had been "one of the bosses" and that staff would refer problems to her.

"I am suggesting ... that you are trying to minimise your role and distance yourself from the operations of Longcare Limited," he said.

Mr Caplan said she had joined the venture as an equal partner with Gordon Rowe and had asked her bank, unsuccessfully, for a loan to help with the establishment of the first home. "You and Gordon were very much together in planning the purchase of Stoke Place House and in setting up the company and you were going to try to achieve your financial part of the partnership by getting a loan from the bank," Mr Caplan said. And he suggested that she was given a share in the company because "you were about to play your full part in Longcare Limited, in effect running Longcare as partners with Gordon".

Mrs Rowe denied this. The court was told that she drew a salary which rose from £8,000 a year to £40,000 a year despite being off work sick for a considerable time. Mrs Rowe, whose last given address was in Windsor, Berkshire, had told the jury that she

had little active involvement with the homes for several significant periods, including 10 months in 1986 when she was suffering post-natal depression and much of 1992 and 1993 after a hysterectomy and a road crash.

But Mr Caplan pointed to detailed entries in the homes record books which suggested she had been involved not only with laundry, toiletries and the catering as she claimed, but also with caring for the residents including details of medication.

Asked why some of the entries were in her handwriting when she said she did not work at Stoke Green House between 1987 and 1990, she said: "Some of the staff were Indian and could not write."

Nigel Rowe, Gordon's son, was responsible there, she said. "I may have put things in the report book but it was not my baby, it was Nigel Rowe's."

Questioned further she said: "I did not do any physical work with the residents."

Mr Caplan said the evidence of several expert witnesses had indicated that mentally handicapped people such as the autistic and Down's syndrome residents at Longcare, should not be punished or shouted at.

Asked whether she had ever punished a resident, Mrs Rowe said: "Never. I would send a resident to their room to cool off but that's it." She admitted shouting, but "not abuse", and denied recommending to one member of staff that she should clip a resident around the ear.

Two other former members of staff, Desmond Tully and Lorraine Field, also each face four charges of ill-treating residents. The case continues.

Haughey wins a reprieve in secret gifts case

Alan Murdoch

Charles Haughey was yesterday given a temporary reprieve before answering claims by the former supermarket magnate Ben Dunne that he secretly paid the politician £1.3m while Taoiseach between 1987 and 1991.

The payments-to-politicians tribunal at Dublin Castle granted an application by Mr Haughey's counsel, Eoin McGonigal, to defer a decision on the confidentiality of discussions between Mr Haughey and Mr Dunne's solicitor, Noel Smyth.

Mr Smyth told the tribunal on Friday that he could not disclose what Mr Haughey told him unless specifically ordered to, as the talks related to his role as Mr Dunne's lawyer. His account of those conversations may reveal whether Mr Haughey knew at all times that Mr Dunne was the source of funds obtained to pay off his large debts.

Mr McGonigal stressed that he was not asking for an indefinite delay, but simply one "allowing the tribunal to complete its inquiries into matters that relate to my client. It seems to me that I am entitled to have that evidence before advising my client, and it should be available to [Mr Haughey] first," he said.

The breathing space given to Mr Haughey echoes numerous eleven-hour escapes as opponents came close to unseating him during his 12 years leading Fianna Fail, Ireland's largest party.

But the issue will still have to be faced probably within the next month. If Mr Haughey cannot refute evidence heard to date he could face ruinous tax

demands or court action seeking return of the £1.3m from the new management of Dunne's Stores.

The tribunal chairman, Mr Justice Brian McCracken, agreed to Mr McGonigal's plea that investigations in London and elsewhere gathering more evidence should be completed first before any decision to order Mr Smyth to reveal what took place during his five meetings with Mr Haughey.

Mr McGonigal said Mr Haughey only received Mr Smyth's statement of evidence last Friday and "while it has been possible to make certain inquiries since that time, [they] will not be complete for some time."

Earlier, the Taoiseach, John Bruton, appeared before the tribunal and confirmed that his Fine Gael party had received donations of £50,000 in April 1991 and £100,000 in 1983 from Mr Dunne following meetings with the businessman.

He said it had been made explicitly clear that no political favours were being given in return for the funds, and Mr Dunne had agreed to this "with alacrity".

But he was reminded that in July 1991 he had told an earlier tribunal "not even the party leader" would normally know the source of business donations. Mr Bruton said yesterday that he had been referring primarily then to donations from the beef industry.

Approaches to Mr Dunne came amid requests to corporate chiefs to help clear Fine Gael's then debt of more than £1m. It emerged that Dunne's was Fine Gael's largest corporate donor at that time.

Suspect held for McGrath death

Peter Beal

A 27-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of murdering judge's daughter Rachel McGrath, whose throat was cut as she waited outside a public house on Friday night, police said today.

The man was also being questioned over the abduction of a 17-year-old girl, said a Greater Manchester Police spokesman.

Mr McGrath, 27, was murdered in a frenzied knife attack as she arrived to collect her boyfriend from the pub in Bramhall, Stockport.

Her father Brian McGrath, 55, is a district judge in the family division in Bolton and Bury. Early yesterday a man was arrested in Caernarfon, North Wales, in connection with the

kidnapping of the 17-year-old girl in Stockport. The police spokesman said: "In connection with (Ms McGrath's) murder, a 27-year-old local man is in custody in Stockport suspected of this offence."

"He is also suspected of the abduction of a 17-year-old girl from Stockport who was taken to Caernarfon, where she escaped unharmed."

"The man was unknown to either of the girls before these two incidents."

It is understood the 17-year-old girl, whose identity police are keeping confidential, was abducted as she was driving to work in Cheadle, Stockport, on Saturday morning.

A police operation was mounted after she managed to flee from the car in which she was being held. - PA News

DAILY POEM

Turns

By Tony Harrison

I thought it made me look more "working class" (as if a bit of checkered cloth could bridge that gap!) I did a turn in it before the glass. My mother said: *It suits you, your dad's cap.* (She preferred me to wear suits and part my hair: *You're every bit as good as that lot are!*)

All the pension queue came out to stare. Dad was sprawled beside the postbox (still VR), his cap turned inside up beside his head, smudged H A H in purple Indian ink and Brylcreem slicks displayed so folk might think he wanted charity for dropping dead.

He never begged. For oww! Death's reticence crowns his life's, and me, I'm opening my trap to hush the class that broke him for the pence that splash like huckish tears into our cap.

To mark Tony Harrison's sixtieth birthday, this week BBC Radio Three is broadcasting a series of poems read by the author. From today until Friday, the Daily Poem will correspond with his readings. "Turns" can be heard today on R3 just before the 1300 news. All the broadcast poems appear in Tony Harrison's *Selected Poems* (Penguin, £6.99).

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Conservative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Labour	<input type="checkbox"/>
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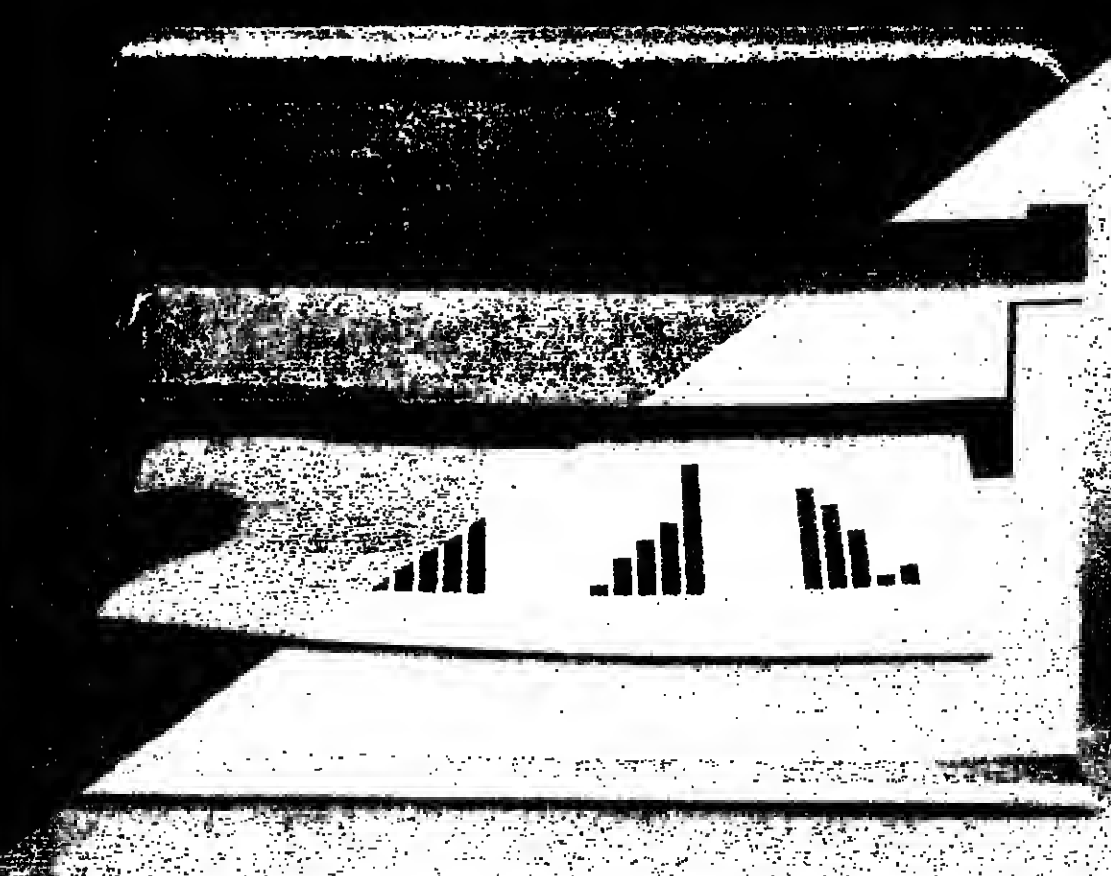
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Rock 'n' roll becomes respectable

Young people urged to join music business as career with prospects

by Ian Burrell

The Music Biz - for years regarded by sensible parents as a dangerous hotbed of rebellion and job insecurity - is now being eagerly promoted by the Government as a career with prospects.

The Department for Education and Employment has funded an important study, launched today, aimed at helping young people to move into an industry which is now one of Britain's biggest export earners.

The managers of artists from Blur to Simply Red and Gary Glitter have contributed to research aimed at helping the British music industry to be better qualified and more business-minded than its competitors.

New music business qualifications are being drawn up so that young people can follow an industry-approved career path. It is a huge turnaround for an industry which has traditionally recruited on an "it's not what you know, but who you know" basis.

The change has been brought about by the IMF, a London-based organisation which represents the management teams of most of the biggest names in British pop music.

James Fisher, general secretary of the IMF - which commissioned the new study along with the DfEE - said youngsters often joined the music industry on a whim.

"They are coming along saying, 'Isn't this groovy man, my kid brother plays in a band'. They are doing it simply from a love of music," he said. "Somebody has got to put some professionalism into it."

The study, *Lifetime Learning within the UK Music Industry*, canvassed the views of 120 of Britain's leading music managers, responsible for the careers of most of the big names in British pop.

The authors, based at the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University, found that 59 per cent of the managers admitted to having no relevant qualifications.

Liam Murphy, head of the research team, said: "If we are to remain competitive in what is now one of our great industrial strengths then we must make sure we have the necessary training and education programmes."

The UK music industry is now valued at £2.5bn and employs 115,000 people full-time.

According to the report, British popular music is now in its third golden period, with Oasis helping to inspire a position of strength in the global market to compare with previous high points led by the Beatles in the 1960s and Culture Club in the early 1980s.

But there are ominous signs which threaten the 20 per cent share of world record sales at present enjoyed by British acts.

The record-buying boom of the early 1990s which was inspired by the arrival of the CD format is now over. The research team found that the growing markets for record sales were in developing countries where English is not the dominant language. Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan are now in the top 15 most valuable pop markets.

Although the British music industry's sophisticated marketing machine has enabled it to boost sales in emerging markets such as Brazil and Indonesia, the report states that the rise of recorded indigenous music in such countries is likely to force down Britain's global market share.

The report debunks a succession of predictions that have been made about the global future of pop music.

The idea of an MTV-inspired homogenisation of world pop has been proved wrong as the station has been forced to splinter its coverage to cover tastes in rock, rap, pop and dance.

Similarly the death of vinyl has not come about. "By early 1995," the researchers noted, "it was clear that the black vinyl LP and 12-inch was alive and well and staging a recovery."

The UK domestic expenditure on records stands at £1.7bn, which is nearly 7 per cent of the world market.



Pointer to success: A producer at work in a London recording studio yesterday. Business qualifications for the music industry are now being drawn up. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathiga

Big players holding back opportunity



Björk: The Icelandic singer's label is looking for backing.

The biggest obstacle facing the British music industry is its domination by the leading record companies, according to the managers of British bands and singers, writes Ian Burrell.

In an anonymous government-funded questionnaire of 120 British music managers, 72 per cent cited the "actions of major record companies" as the main barrier to opportunity.

The stifling role of the big companies was seen as more damaging to the industry than the lack of diversity in pop radio, or the lack of resources for music education.

"From their position of strength, the majors that buy into independent labels can dictate terms and conditions... including the promotion of the product, the image of the artist and even live performance," said Liam Murphy, of the Policy Research Institute at Leeds

Metropolitan University, who conducted the study.

The report's findings coincided with news that One Little Indian, the independent record label behind Björk and Skunk Anansie, is looking for substantial backing from a larger entertainment group.

The label made pre-tax profits of £414,354 in 1995, and its need for outside support will re-open the debate about how independent the British "indy" record market really is.

The volatility of the market has already driven several prominent labels to seek alliances with the majors. Creation records, Oasis's label, sold 49 per cent of their shareholding to Sony Music in 1992. The Japanese company paid another £14m last spring to extend the arrangement for another five years.

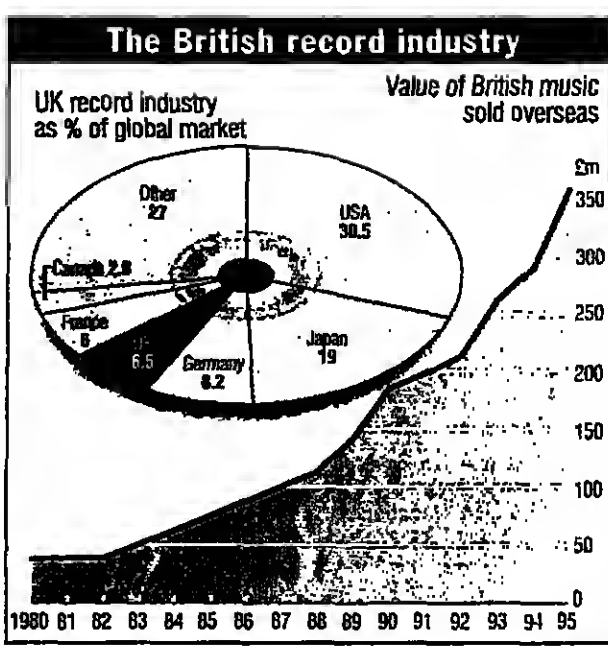
The big five record compa-

nies, EMI, Polygram, BMG, Warner and Sony have carved up 80 per cent of the British music industry between them.

"When independents have artists with mass appeal they do not have the capacity to deal with the demand," Mr Murphy said. "A number of independents have a history of being run by people who are passionate about music rather than having fantastic business sense."

He cited the example of Factory records' failure to make a profit from New Order's *Blue Monday*, the biggest selling 12-inch single of all time, because of the cost of the packaging.

Yet while the majors have the capacity to deal with famous artists, they also have a fear of taking risks, thus stifling creativity at ground level.



HALF THE FAT OF REAL MILK CHOCOLATE.

Last night an advertisement appeared on television in which it was claimed that a confectionery product, FLYTE, was a real chocolate bar with half the fat of milk chocolate. The manufacturers of FLYTE would like to point out that this claim, which was made in all good faith, is in fact true, and would like to apologise for any disappointment or emotional stress suffered by the public while impatiently awaiting the launch of FLYTE. "Sorry it took so long."

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THE INDEPENDENT election '97

Election tour '97: Party chiefs put thousands of miles under their belts as campaign finally draws to a close

Major flies in face of opposition

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

All that was missing were the baseball caps, T-shirts and the bomber jackets for the roadies. John Major's unprecedented campaign tour to the four corners of the United Kingdom was intended as a dramatic gesture of his support for the Union before polling day.

But the trip from Downing Street to Belfast, Edinburgh, and the Menai Bridge in North Wales may be seen as the Major '97 Farewell Tour.

The leader of the Tory hand

thanked each of four of the motorcycle policemen who had escorted his motorcade from central London, for the last time in the campaign, to RAF Northolt and with his wife, Norma, posed with them for a group photograph.

Shirley Stott, his campaign manager, took snaps for the Major family album to study later if John and Norma have more time to put their feet up after Thursday.

There were shots of Mr Major surrounded by 20 RUC officers for a walkabout in Donegal Place in the centre of

Belfast; the fighting speech from the platform of the battle-bus at The Mound in the heart of Edinburgh; and posing in a layby overlooking the Menai Bridge with Norma, a bored field of sheep, and William Hague, the young Welsh Secretary who could take the leadership one day.

Covering 1,010 miles in a day, Mr Major showed he would not give up without a fight. The air crew decorated the VIP cabin with blue balloons, streamers and a "Good Luck" message. As it taxied to a halt they played the record he had requested on a

phone-in show in the West Country at the start of the campaign: Tina Turner's 'Simply the Best'.

The trip to Ulster could have been a final, two-fingered gesture to the IRA. It was the first time that a Prime Minister had visited Ulster in the midst of a General Election. But Brian Mawhinney, the party Chairman, and an Ulsterman, who accompanied Mr Major, said it was intended as a dramatic gesture to symbolise Mr Major's support for the Union.

Some of the eight Tory candidates who are fighting seats in Northern Ireland against the

other parties, including the Unionists, had been invited to be there, outside Marks & Spencer's for the leader's arrival. They included Sarah Dines, 31, a London barrister campaigning on the slogan, "East Belfast is as British as Basildon" - the Essex seat that proved the turning point in the 1992 'comeback' Election.

It was just like going to the High Street shops in the Essex new town, except for the security. At the Disney Store, one of the shop assistants said: "We only knew something was happening when we saw those two."

She pointed to two police officers with a sniper rifle on the roof of Richard Shops.

After popping into Tesco, Mr Major said in one of the dozen of "doorsteps" he has taken to the Press that a vote for Sinn Féin would be "a vote that endorses the terrorism, the murder, the violence and mayhem we have seen in Northern Ireland." It may not stop Gerry Adams being elected on Thursday.

A woman doing her shopping wondered what all the fuss was about. "Was it Gerry Adams?" she asked.

In Edinburgh Mr Major was joined by three leading Tories, including Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, and Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary. They stood on the tiny battle-bus platform and a heckler shouted: "You've got a quarter of your Scottish party with you."

Mr Major told the voters: "Before you come to Thursday, stop and think and pause. Realise what is at stake. This may be a vote you cast that will change the history and the future of Scotland and the rest of the UK."



Sir Denis: Hushed away

Sir Denis ventures opinion on Major

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Sir Denis Thatcher, husband of Baroness Thatcher, has delivered a characteristically blunt and embarrassing reply to a question about John Major's chances of winning the election. His one word response was: "nil", followed by a chuckle.

Sir Denis made this pronouncement during one of the very few moments he has been allowed to emerge from a tight cocoon drawn around himself and the former prime minister during their visit to Hong Kong.

He was with Lady Thatcher and the Hong Kong businessman and socialite David Tang, a former Tory party fund-raiser. They had been visiting one of Mr Tang's pet projects, an English language tuition centre, when a French news agency reporter managed to shout a single question to Sir Denis.

Edward Llewellyn, an aide to Governor, Chris Patten, who looks after Mr Patten's political contacts in London, was clearly agitated on hearing Sir Denis's comment and hustled him into the back of a limousine which then sped away. Mr Tang said he had not heard what Sir Denis said but added: "There are a lot of rather annoyed people around."

The visit to the English language centre was supposed to have been a media-free event, but the colony is full of publicity-seekers who see no point in having important personages make a visit if it is not reported.

The Thatchers joined Mr Tang after having lunch with Li Ka-shing, one of the richest men in Hong Kong, and one of the biggest donors to the Conservative battle-chest for the last election campaign.

Lady Thatcher has been careful to make no unscripted remarks during her three day visit to the colony and has said not a single word about the election. She has confined her activities to two set-piece ceremonial occasions, the biggest of which was Sunday's opening of the world's highest road and rail suspension bridge which links the colony's new island airport to the mainland.

Sir Denis has had a strictly non-speaking role, trailing loyally behind his wife as she plunged through the whirlwind of activities which are typical of her overseas visits.

Is it a bird? A plane? No ... it's the Lib Dem delight

Barrie Clement

Ladies of a certain age in Eastbourne will never be quite the same again. Out of the sun in a helicopter he swooped, the ex-Royal Marine officer smiling that crinkled smile and flirting with their voting intentions. However, no sooner had Paddy Ashdown arrived, he was gone, leaving the ladies to pat their noses with restorative camphor.

It was enough to make a girl palpitate - or even vote Lib-Dem. Sufficient numbers of them are being wooed away from the Tories, Mr Ashdown believes, to make the cameo appearance worthwhile.

The short, sharp stop on the Costa Geriatrica in southern England was illustrative of his other helicopter hops yesterday - wind-provoking and, above all, quick.

It will be more of the same in the next two days as he makes commando raids on 16 constituencies. Yesterday, the Paddywagon coach left Westminster just after 10am to Battersea heliport where we lifted off in a 24-seater Sikorsky at 10.38. Exactly 30 minutes later the aircraft, normally used for shuttling North Sea oil employees around the Shetlands, touched down in Colchester Barracks - to the evident bemusement of the other ranks.

A jog across the lawn into a coach and two minutes later we were outside government property and Mr Ashdown was able to hold forth without polluting



Flying visit: Paddy Ashdown and his entourage arriving at Colchester yesterday - first stop on the Liberal Democrat leader's whirlwind tour

Photograph: John Voss

the apolitical atmosphere of the Ministry of Defence.

Having addressed his loyal troops for ten minutes outside the down-at-heel Arena Sports & Leisure Club, the entourage found itself back on the bus.

At 11.39 we were up and

away across the fields of Essex, the mud flats of the Thames and Medway, heading for the twin-towers and pearly Eastbourne.

The Lib-Dem manifesto might be carefully costed, but the expected arrival of additional television crews meant

there were 25 people for a 24-seater aircraft. James Gurling, a former Lib-Dem official, was left behind at Eastbourne.

A 14-minute hop west along the coast to Lewes, where more activists found themselves addressed by the great man. The

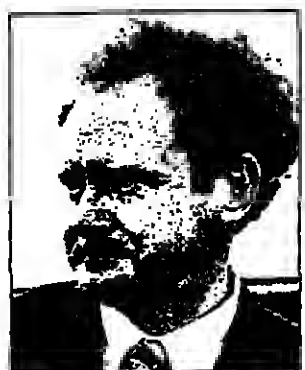
helicopter disappeared for refuelling and we subsequently took off for Twickenham around an hour late.

Having landed at the Harlequin rugby-club ground we were back on a coach for a five minute drive to Twickenham Green.

The Lib-Dem leader apologised to a crowd of activists for his lateness. The wind had been with the helicopter - presumably a metaphor for an increase in Lib-Dem popularity - but the leader had been delayed by the tumult which had at-

tended his appearances. The pilot begged to differ. He said the wind was against us all the way.

Asked whether ten-minute swoops on constituencies could make any difference to voting intentions, Mr Ashdown said: "Sorry, I've got to run."



McGuinness: Sinn Féin hope

Flood of postal votes in Ulster seats

David McKittick
Irish correspondent

Fiercely contested elections in the west of Northern Ireland have generated such large numbers of postal and proxy votes that electoral staff have been almost overwhelmed.

Fifteen thousand applications have been made in three constituencies - Mid-Ulster,

West Tyrone and Fermanagh-South Tyrone. As a result, electoral staff have been working up to 12 hours a day to process the applications in time for the election.

The record number of applications mean more staff have been taken on, some working up to 80 hours a week.

Such unprecedented numbers clearly point to an excep-

tionally high turnout on polling day.

Although the western counties of Northern Ireland have often been associated in the past with various types of electoral malpractice, the major parties who are involved were last night making no public allegations against each other.

A worker with the SDLP campaign in West Tyrone said

his party had recently put through between 800 and 1,000 applications for postal and, in particular, proxy votes. He said 90 per cent of these were for students and nurses from the largely rural area who were living away from home.

Both nationalist and Unionist parties said they had been making particularly strenuous efforts to get their vote out, with

one part of the initiative being the increased use of postal and proxy votes.

A particularly tight contest is going on in West Tyrone, a newly created seat which the Ulster Unionists, SDLP and Sinn Féin all claim they can win.

Passions are also running high in Mid-Ulster, where Sinn Féin ambitions to oust the defending candidate, the Rev

William McCrea, are matched by Protestant determination to stop Martin McGuinness taking the seat.

The contest is not so close in Fermanagh-South Tyrone, where Ulster Unionist Ken Maginnis is favourite to hold his seat, but the constituency often produced particularly high turnouts, on occasion reaching almost 90 per cent.

THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

THE CAMPAIGN

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, followed up his BBC Election Call, with a flying visit - by helicopter - to Colchester, Eastbourne, Lewes, and Twickenham, before going on to an Oxford rally. His itinerary over the three final days of the campaign, this week, is targeting 21 seats.

Labour was not to be outdone, with every member of the shadow Cabinet said to be out and about with back-up teams of Labour candidates - though the claim did not tally with today's detailed list of "Frontbench election campaign visits", issued by the famed Millbank press office.

But John Prescott, dubbed "Mr Motivator" by a straight-faced Peter Mandelson, is apparently doing the work of a whole host of politicians.

Comfortably ensconced at the heart of his Millbank web, a proud Mr Mandelson said yesterday that the deputy leader will today pass the 10,000-mile mark of his nationwide battle-bus tour, with 80 meetings, 97 constituency visits, 500 media interviews and "personal contact" with 38,500 "very, very lucky people".

Meanwhile, John Major decided on a marathon tour of all four corners of the United Kingdom, with a "wake-up" call to the voters to recognise the alleged threat posed by Labour to the Union.

KEY ARGUMENTS

John Major concluded his tour of the United Kingdom on Abingdon Green, opposite the Commons, where he delivered a warning that Labour posed a double threat to the United Kingdom, through a break-up of the Union generated by its plans for devolution, and through a sell-out of British interests in Europe.

Tony Blair, who had earlier addressed Labour's press conference via a video link, warned of the threat posed to the National Health Service from a fifth-term Conservative Government - a message later reinforced by Labour's final election broadcast. He said that the Conservatives had been laying plans for more private medical insurance, generated by a deal between Norwich Union and the NHS Trusts; providing low-cost, fast-track treatment in NHS private wards.

The Liberal Democrats also returned to the NHS at their election press conference - it is one of the voters' prime concerns - but Mr Ashdown told an Oxford rally last night that there would be a "catastrophe" in the next century if education was not made an immediate priority with appropriate resources.

GOOD DAY



Michael Heseltine was the subject of "literally hundreds" of bats over the weekend, said a Ladbrokes spokesman. William Hill has accordingly cut the odds of him succeeding John Major from 4/1 to 2/1; Ladbrokes has taken them down from 10/1 to 7/2. John Major, meanwhile, had a terrible day. But even in the light of such a betting frenzy, only a cynic would say that that equaled an even better day for Mr Heseltine.

ONE TO REMEMBER

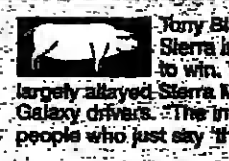
Saying he had had informal discussions with a number of Tory MPs, senior Liberal Democrat Mercedes Campbell predicted: "If the Conservatives Party embarks upon the kind of anti-European course to which it appears to be set, I think there will be a very substantial number of Conservative MPs of the One Nation variety - who will certainly be looking around to find another place - another party perhaps - to which they should add their support."

BAD DAY



With only 48 hours to go until the polling booths open, Mr Major's campaigning looks all but over. With the polls indicating a majority of more than 100, Mr Major embarked on a last-minute 1,000-mile round trip to try and woo the "millions" of voters who have still not made up their minds. It ended with an impromptu speech on the green outside Westminster, in which he asserted that there were "72 hours left to save the Union".

HOGWASH



Tony Blair decided some time ago that it was the ordinary man with a Sierra in the driveway who would have to be convinced Labour was to win. Yesterday he told the Yorkshire Post that the 100 Labour had largely allied to Mr Blair's base and that now it had graduated to the support of Ford Galaxy drivers. "The interesting thing is the number of very successful business people who just say 'these Tories are a disgrace', and a disgrace," he added.

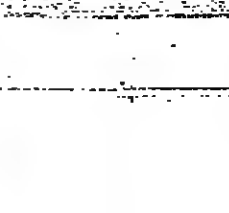
THE OTHER PARTIES



The Teddy Bear Alliance launched its manifesto demanding a "free-free Britain", retention of "our clause four scratching" and "honey for all". Party leader Edward Bear, who is contesting Kensington and Chelsea against Alan Clark, said he would give Mr Clark "a good run for his honey".

Sean Connery appeared in the SNP's last broadcast of the campaign and urged Scots to vote for a stake in their own future. Interviewed in the Scottish Sun, Connery said he would return to Scotland when the country became independent. SNP leader Alex Salmond later described him as an "international Scot".

MEDIA STAR



National Law Party members Bruno Denry, Martin Ahmed and Ian Docker obliged a very large group of press and broadcast photographers yesterday with a display of "logic flying": a refined state reached after several minutes of meditation. The press pack found the success almost too much, but eventually the Easterners began. The party claims the activity could achieve "highest relaxation, a perfect health for everyone; a flourishing economy, and no more crime and terrorism". In the room where the demonstration took place, a state of near-perfect harmony was achieved.

John Major

Dealer who strove to shine with PM



Christian Wolmar on links between John Major, a diamond merchant and Tory party funds

Willie Nagel is a multi-millionaire diamond broker in his seventies who, according to acquaintances, does not mix very well with other people but desperately wants to be accepted by the establishment.

Letters leaked to the *Independent* show that Mr Nagel first met John Major through his Huntingdon Constituency agent, Peter Brown, with whom he had dinner in 1991.

The following year, he arranged tickets for Wimbledon Finals Day for Mr Brown and his wife Antonia. Mr Brown thanked him and confirmed his "very generous offer of sponsorship of £5,000 each on the occasion of the Opera and Concert Evening on 25 July and our Victory Ball on 13 November". The Huntingdon Conservative Association then invoiced Mr Nagel for £10,000 for "advertising in brochures".

After another lunch with Mr Brown, Mr Nagel wrote to Mr Major's agent on 23 October 1992 enclosing promotional material on a pilotless aircraft developed by Israeli Aircraft Industries. The letter said: "As discussed over lunch, I am sending the relevant material regarding what is considered the best protection for troops in any fighting zone in the world. It is believed that the situation in Bosnia warrants such a purchase and it is for this reason that I am enclosing the main details. I sincerely hope that you will be able to activate it."

Mr Brown then wrote to Mr Major at Downing Street with information on the "combat-proven UAV" system. He told the Prime Minister: "I'm not suggesting that any action could be taken upon this but I wonder whether you might pass the information on to any department concerned with such equipment, since it may be of interest to them."

Mr Nagel later sent Mr Brown a magnum of J&B Sancerre champagne to celebrate the New Year in 1993, which Mr Brown said he would drink "when there is more to celebrate".

In May 1993 Mr Nagel wrote to Mr Major at the constituency headquarters trying to interest the Prime Minister in having lunch with a friend who could have been useful to the party and concluded by saying: "I am taking the liberty of writing to you directly to Huntingdon and via Peter who, naturally, is the only person who is aware of it all."

Mr Brown wrote to Mr Nagel in January 1994 after another meeting and saying that

"I will, of course, discuss with the PM the points you raised on the next appropriate occasion but I really want to say thank you for once again offering such generous support to the Conservative Party in Huntingdon". In March 1993 and April 1994, there are further invoices of £5,000 from the association to Mr Nagel for "political briefings and information". Mr Nagel also agreed to sponsor the Conservative Agents' Journal with an advertisement costing £800 for his lobbying firm, Punchline.

However, during 1994 the relationship between Mr Nagel and the Conservatives in Huntingdon appears to sour. Mr Nagel telephoned the Prime Minister at home. This apparently led to a complaint to Mr Nagel, who then wrote to Arabella Warburton, the Mr Major's diary secretary, to "correct any possible misunderstandings". He had not understood that "the PM himself had requested that I should only call at No 10. Had I realised this, ob-

sonal style to which, I had become accustomed".

By this time, Mr Brown seemed to become worried about the relationship. A lengthy briefing note from the Huntingdon association to Mr Major on 5 August, headed "Willie Nagel", said: "I think we need to address this problem to the benefit of us all. Quite clearly, the situation is getting rather heated."

The note said: "There is no doubt that there is an element of self-interest in WN's wish to be closely associated with us. He has a network of friends, some of whom could be very important to the party. They include diplomats, industrialists and prominent members of the Jewish community. Notwithstanding his eagerness to let it be known that he has made your acquaintance, many of his contacts are highly influential."

It continued: "WN was tremendously helpful in talking to Lord Rothermere during the period when Simon Heffer was doing his worst for you... There is a down side of which we are all aware. His persistence along with his ability never to take no for an answer is wearing in the extreme, which is part of the cause of the relationship souring."

However, the relationship clearly improved, as on 28 November, Mr Nagel, in a letter to Mr Major, acknowledges receipt of "your friendly letter of 22 November" and went on to remark on "cool-headedness and your ability to come to the heart of any problem, which are the essential ingredients of a great man".

Mr Nagel also talked about the forthcoming visit to Israel by the Prime Minister: "I am pleased to hear that you are ready to consider a visit to the Diamond Exchange [where Mr Nagel's Israel headquarters are located]. He was hopeful that the programme "will include me". In fact, Mr Nagel was invited on the trade mission in March 1995, which included a meeting with the then prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin.

In the tour brochure, Mr Major talked about "the presence of such a distinguished group of senior British businessmen". Indeed, most of the group of 28 businessmen were chairmen or senior executives of quoted companies such as Lord Young (Cable and Wireless), Richard Giordano (British Gas), Sir Robert Clarke (United Biscuits), Sir Richard Greenbury (Marks & Spencer), Sir Christopher Hogg (Reuters), Martin Laing (John

Laing), Sir Sidney Lipworth (National Westminster) and Lord Sterling (P&O). However, the Diamond Exchange was not on the itinerary.

Mr Nagel still manages to remain in Conservative circles. In December he attended a Conservative Friends of Israel dinner at which Mr Major was present and both men were also at a Huntingdon Foundation Dinner organised a couple of months ago.

Tangled web: The diamond broker Willie Nagel (far left), his home (centre), and Peter Brown, John Major's Huntingdon constituency agent (above left), with the Prime Minister. Photographs: Adrian Dennis, Manil Masons

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Blacks play race card on Labour

Ian Burrell

The race card has finally been played on Labour, not by a Tory backbencher but by senior figures in the black community.

The television presenter Darius Howes and an alliance of black church leaders in south London are seeking to mobilise the black vote behind the Liberal Democrats. In particular, they are backing Keith Kerr, a black LibDem candidate, to oust Labour's Kate Hoey from her Vauxhall constituency, which includes Brixton. They claim Labour has overlooked the concerns of black people while concentrating its efforts on the fight for middle England.

Bernie Grant, Labour candidate for Tottenham, appeared to endorse such a view when he attacked the "offensive" use of a bulldog in Labour's campaign. He told a meeting of the

North Islington Black Socialist Society: "The question of race has been raised in an obscure way by the Labour Party."

In his speech, delivered to a private meeting last week and made public yesterday, he said: "Regiments like the Coldstream Guards had this bulldog as their mascot and they used to terrorise people in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. "When they went into battle against the Zulus, they used to sing 'Rule Britannia', 'Land of Hope and Glory' and these types of songs."

"It is a damn disgrace that the Labour Party of all parties, that is supposed to be an international party, it is a disgrace that they should use these kinds of symbols in order to push for the fact that they are patriotic."

In Vauxhall, Mr Kerr, a manager with British Airways and who was born in nearby Peckham, has won the support of

several prominent black church leaders.

The Reverend Hewie Andrew, a Methodist minister, and the Reverend David Udo, director of race relations for the Diocese of Southwark, have organised meetings for Mr Kerr to speak to members of other black-led churches.

Mr Andrew said: "If Keith wins then all the political parties will have to think, think and think again. They would never be able to take us for granted again."

Canvassing on a south London estate yesterday, Ms Hoey said she was not concerned by the threat posed by Mr Kerr and expected to increase her already large majority of over 10,000.

She said she had been well-received by black constituents during the campaign. "The black community is nearly 100 per cent solid behind me," she said.

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John Laing

THE INDEPENDENT
election '97

Key marginals lean toward Labour

John Major is pinning his hopes of winning the election on those still undecided. Yesterday *Independent* reporters visited six Tory marginals and found voters coming off the fence and switching their allegiance to Tony Blair

Michael Streeter

Middle England is beginning to swing behind New Labour in significant numbers as polling day approaches, according to *The Independent's* group of disaffected Conservatives in a key marginal seat.

Over the final, crucial weekend a number of the group in Redditch, Worcestershire – who have swayed to-and-fro during the campaign – have decided to take the "time for a change" message to heart. After much soul-searching in recent days, six out of the 13 will "definitely" vote for Labour with one undecided.

This is the strongest move towards Tony Blair's party in the group for some time and suggests a healthy victory in Redditch and augers well for the party in picking up the vote of so-called Mordred Man of Mid-England.

The reasons for the belated change vary between a feeling that the party under Tony Blair, who has impressed the voters more in recent days, can finally be trusted on the economy as

REDDITCH

well as other issues, and a sense that the Tories are tired and have broken too many promises.

Butcher Brian Nicolls, 60, a late switcher, saw the Prime Minister's weekend interview with Jonathan Dimbleby and that made up his mind. "I watched the interviews because



I wanted to make up my mind. Mr Major was asked about previous promises not to raise tax and he could not give a straight forward answer. I have not voted Labour for many years but I'm going to now.

Engineer Mark Redfern, 29, saw Tony Blair's Frost interview and liked what the Labour leader said including Labour's support for the Social Chapter. "I was a bit disappointed with

Mr Blair early in the campaign but he's doing better now. I just hope he keeps his promises."

Another Labour voter will be former British Gas travel manager Roger Frost, 54, who feels let down by the Conservatives, including over the way elderly people have been forced to sell their homes to pay for long-term care.

"It's a big change for me to vote Labour. I've never done so before. I'd never have voted for Neil Kinnock but I feel a lot more comfortable with Tony Blair. I feel at home with him."

Warehouse operative Adrian Blick, 30, has wavered over voting for Labour but will now back them because he feels they have better policies on the NHS, schools and the jobless. "I think the result will be tight as some will change their mind at the last minute. But I will not. It just feels right to vote for Labour, we need a change."

For local government worker Craig Cotes, 37, backing New Labour is more anti-Conservative than pro-Mr Blair. "To be honest I think Tony Blair is a bit of a prat. But the

country's in a rut and we need something new. I hope Labour proves me wrong." He liked some of the Liberal Democrat's policies but felt the party was "out of the running."

Toolmaker Andrew Orsial, 35, has been more and more impressed with Tony Blair who will win his vote. "I saw him on the party election broadcast when he was talking at home and he

made a lot of sense." He feels the Tories are split and not fully committed to winning and likes Labour's policies on education and especially training for young people.

Former sales consultant Susan Lovett, 38, is typical of many of those remaining with the Conservatives, believing the party is stronger on the core issue of the economy. "I just

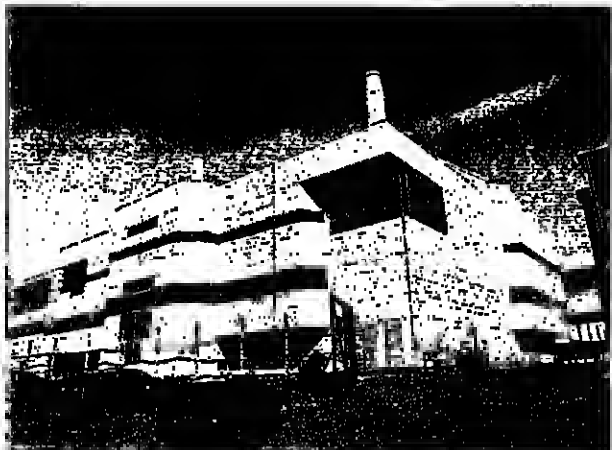
trust the Tories more." She adds: "Perhaps if Tony Blair had been more willing to face the voters directly I would have looked at him with more respect."



Eleventh hour: The Undecideds in key constituencies like Redditch are thinking perhaps it is "time for a change".

Photograph:

STEVENAGE



Stevenage: Tories now on the endangered list

Victim of the recession is loath to forgive

Jojo Moyes

Many Stevenage voters are being diverted away from their natural home with the Conservatives. Jo Hilsden, who with her husband, Trevor, runs TJ's Café, can reel off a list of small shopkeepers who have closed in the past four years – the kitchen designer, the lady with the outsize shoe shop and so on – it is this list which has turned her against the Tories.

"I was a Tory voter. But we've been here four years. And in that time we've suffered so much under the recession and we've had no help at all. When we asked for help, they said it was just something we all had to go through. They said it was the global economy. Now they're trying to claim the credit for it getting better."

Mrs Hilsden could forgive the Conservatives almost anything but she couldn't forgive them letting her down. "They're not the party of small business. I'm voting for Tony Blair." In the 1980s Stevenage embodied a Tory dream, with its high levels of new owner-occupation and young, aspirational families. But it has been hit by the recession and feels reluctant to forgive.

With the closure of firms and unemployment creeping up to 6 per cent, this is a place 40 minutes from London where it is possible to see a choice of flats for £25,000; a very tired new town. In this climate, local candidates have taken on an unusual significance. What matters, say voters, is what they will do for Stevenage. And this is where the Tories are losing

votes. Despite an impressive list of visiting heavyweight support, few seem to have seen Timothy Wood, the candidate, canvassing in the flesh, and he has failed to capitalise on any residual goodwill. Voters like Rachel Barber say their vote has been determined by "effective" canvassing on behalf of Labour candidate Barbara Follett. "Barbara Follett seems very Stevenage-orientated."

Her whole family have been Tory voters, she said. "But none of them is very sure any more. The problem faced by local Conservatives is that they are seen to be campaigning against their own record. Many local Conservative voters say they have switched on the basis of their own experience of apparently declining services."

Pensioner Violet Piper abandoned a lifetime habit of voting Conservative for the Liberal Democrats on the basis of education and the NHS. She was having to help finance her grandchildren through university. "They just don't do enough to help students."

Her brother recently arrived from South Africa and got jaundice. "The NHS said he had to wait a week for tests and he was getting yellower and thinner. He'd paid all his taxes. In the end he went back to South Africa early and they did it straight away," she said. Her husband, Bob, also a Tory waverer, seemed minded to stick with them, she said. "But I'll persuade him." Overall, Stevenage voters appear to reinforce the adage that opposition parties do not win elections, governments lose them.

Mood of change threatens Tory fight back

TAMWORTH

Michael Streeter

Twelve months ago New Labour won a crushing victory over the Conservatives in the South East Staffordshire by-election. On Thursday the party seems certain to repeat the win in the re-drawn seat of Tamworth – though by a reduced margin – according to a survey of former Conservative voters. Out of 15 people who voted Tory in recent General Elections, three said that they would definitely vote Labour, six will stay with the Conservatives, and the others are undecided. The mood of change, coupled with signs of tactical voting, indicates that New Labour will comfortably achieve the 5.2 per cent swing it needs based on the 1992 result.

The Liberal Democrats may have won the moral arguments in many voters' eyes but will pick up fewer votes; as one woman put it: "In the end the choice is between red or blue."

Among the switchers the mood is more a protest against the last 18 years than enthusiasm for Tony Blair.

Businessman Tony Bishop, 51, believes the Government has run out of steam and is voting Labour for the first time. "They've had 18 years in office and if they've not done what they wanted they've wasted their time," he said. "Labour are untied and I'm a little nervous. But it's the only option I can see."

Civil servant Hanora Orme, another switcher, is worried about the right wing taking over. "Having been in for so long they are bringing in extreme measures. New Labour

seem more middle of the road, how the Tories used to be."

Garth Thomas, 57, is a "cradle Conservative" who will now vote Labour. Self-employed, he was forced to give up one business through ill health – and feels the Conservatives have forgotten those who earn less than the average national wage.

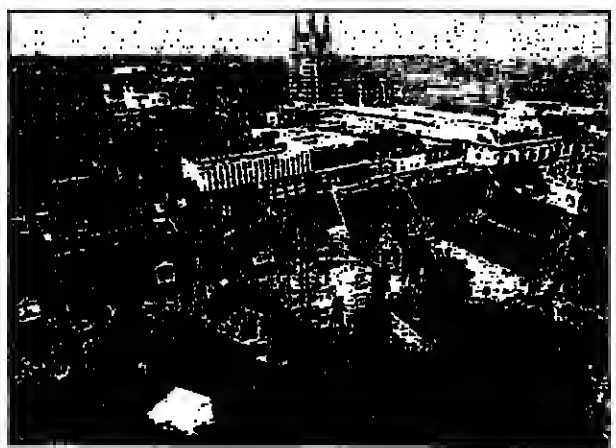
Former Conservative voter Linda Chetwind, 47, is put off by the negative election campaign. She has real concerns over the state of the NHS but is still confused about whom to support. "Half of me says that I know where I am with the Conservatives, but I think I will probably vote Labour."

John Thomas, 54, will decide at the last minute. He rates Paddy Ashdown's intelligence and honesty but says his party has no chance of winning. After voting Conservative at three general elections Mr Thomas believes Tony Blair should probably be given a chance.

Carol Kelly, 48, is torn between the main parties to make a decision yet but when pressed says she will probably take the "safer" option of voting Conservative again.

Europe is the main worry for some older voters. Stanley Lang, 80, will switch from the Tories to the Referendum Party: "I want to be independent from Europe," he says.

Obviously for the Conservatives some non-Tories may vote tactically. Liberal Democrat supporter Karen Gray, 29, a local government worker, was quite blunt. "I'm voting Labour because they have a better chance of winning than the Liberal Democrats here."



The choice is red or blue, say Tamworth voters

BEDFORD



Bedford: 61st on Labour's critical list

Conservatives' battle over disillusionment

Kim Sengupta

The situation is simple. Bedford is 61st on the list of 100 critical seats Labour must win to get a majority in the Commons and form a new government. And circumstances could hardly be better to achieve that goal.

The boundary changes have turned Bedford from a Tory bedrock with a majority of over 16,000 to a marginal with a majority of 5,000. Crucially, the remaining Tory vote is hardly solid. There appears to be a mood of disillusionment and drift. Even if the discontented do not all go to Labour, a significant number appear intent on deserting their party.

As Labour's Patrick Wall and Bob Blackman for the Conservatives fight that last yard towards the line, this is the mood on the streets.

Some Conservatives are leaving the fold, but more for the Liberal Democrats than Labour. Some are even thinking of voting for the Referendum Party. At the same time, there's a significant number of people who have not made up their minds, as well as a large pool of apathy.

Cheryl Wharton-Logue, of Winchester Road, Bedford, who works in promotions, will switch her vote to the Liberal Democrats from the Conservatives. She said: "I am angry at the way John Major allowed the health service to be run down. I have got three children and I am extremely worried about the state of education."

Her mother, Beryl Rogers, a retired administrative assistant, has voted Liberal Democrat in

the past and will do so again. She stated: "It makes me angry when people say a vote for the Lib Dems will be a vote wasted. They are the only ones who are honest about their policies."

Peter Willis, a retired dental surgeon, will switch his vote from Liberal Democrats to Labour this time around. He used to vote Conservative but stopped when "they no longer cared about poor people. I will be voting Labour."

Geoffrey Wheeler, a 39-year-old account executive is a Liberal Democrat convert. He said he was disgusted by the aura of sleaze surrounding the Tories. He added: "I had voted Conservative in the past, including the last election, but I cannot do so for the time being. I'm sick and tired of all the sexual and financial scandals."

Richard Nelson, 37, a computer systems manager toyed with the idea of voting Labour but returned to the Conservatives after Tony Blair left him underwhelmed. He said: "At the start of the campaign I was thinking of voting Labour. But the longer it went on the less convinced I became. I'll be voting Conservative."

Traditional Labour voters appear to be staying with their party and are also fairly confident that they will wrest Bedford, and with it the country, from the Tories.

John Dickens, 43, Head of Politics at the University of Luton, of Castle Road, Bedford, said: "I voted Labour in the past and I shall do so again. With the boundary changes I think we've got a very good chance of winning this seat."

Hard to put a face to predicted Labour swing

CLEETHORPES

Steve Boggan

Talk to a traditional Conservative voter in Cleethorpes and you will encounter resigned acceptance that a Labour MP will be elected here on Thursday for the first time in living memory. Labour supporters will tell you the same; so will Liberal Democrats. Yet the signs on the street yesterday were that this seat is not so clear cut as many voters assume.

In order to take the seat from Michael Brown, the right-of-centre Tory, the Blairite Shona McIsaac needs to overturn a majority of about 6,500. Statisticians say taking Cleethorpes, Labour's 74th target seat, would give Labour a majority of at least 30. Boundary changes have been kind to Labour, eradicating some of the Tory heartlands in the southern parts of the old Brigg and Cleethorpes constituency. Party canvassers say old Tories are coming over to Labour in their droves, but we found precious few on the streets yesterday.

Many people intending to vote Conservative said they believed Labour would win. But, when asked whether their friends were switching to Labour, none could name any. Alan Briscoe and his wife, Terry, both in their fifties, said they wavered for a time, but ultimately felt they couldn't trust Tony Blair. "I'm afraid I can remember what it was like the last time Labour were in, and I believe the unions are waiting in the wings," said Mr Briscoe.

One waverer *The Independent* spoke to two weeks ago has now decided to come down on the

side of the Conservatives. John Bayless, 49, a financial adviser, said he had been swayed by Labour's plans for Scottish devolution.

"I believe that is the thin end of the wedge," he said. Mr Bayless was also swayed by the Conservatives' promise to hold a referendum on a single currency. He was unaware that Labour had made the same pledge, reflecting the Labour campaign hierarchy's concern that they have failed to get the party's policy on Europe across to many voters.

There was some evidence that young people are impressed by the honesty of the Liberal Democrats, although there was a belief, too, that a Lib-Dem vote was a waste.

Sarah Langley, 20, said: "I'm voting Labour tactically because I want the Tories out. But if there was any chance of the Liberal Democrat [Keith Meltton] getting in, I'd vote for him. I like their policies better than Labour's. Labour seems to have forgotten about the ordinary people."

However, the rump of traditional Labour voters in the constituency feel confident that they will win and they see Tony Blair and his reforms as the reason why one nation Tories will switch.

"John Major doesn't seem to have any life in him, whereas Tony Blair has revitalised Labour," said Kathleen Wilbourne, 50. "People are ready for a change but they are also concerned about other issues, particularly health. Hospitals round here are so bad, I'd rather slit my throat than go in."



On target: But Labour's new support hard to pin down

Significant minority could swing Tory seat to Labour

WATFORD

Fran Abrams

Tory voters in this previously safe constituency are now unhappy with their party. Most will return to the fold, unable, in the end, to bring themselves to vote for anyone else.

But a significant minority will not. The swing in Watford could be enough to send Labour's Claire Ward to Westminster. If it does, Watfordians will be able to boast that theirs is the youngest MP – Ms Ward, a trainee solicitor, is just 24. *The Independent's* small and entirely unscientific survey supported

the party's claim that it was just ahead of the Tories, who have held the seat since 1979.

Labour needs a 7 per cent swing to overturn the 9,500 majority with which Tristan Garel-Jones won here in 1992. If the party's efforts pay off and if the win reflects a uniform national picture, Labour will have a 50-seat majority in Parliament.

Valerie Hayden, who works as a secretary in London, is typical of those unhappy Tories who will turn out in the end to support their party. "I think I've decided," she said. "Quite frankly, I can't see Tony Blair

as Prime Minister. I'm not entirely happy, but I don't think anyone is entirely happy with their government. I don't want to part with our currency and I think Labour would do that."

Her concern with Europe reflects a trend in Watford that could be the undoing of the Tory candidate, Robert Gordon, who hopes to take over Mr Garel-Jones's former place in Westminster.

The Referendum Party seems to be polling strongly

here – the Tories, talking down the problem, have apparently admitted that it could take 2,500 votes.

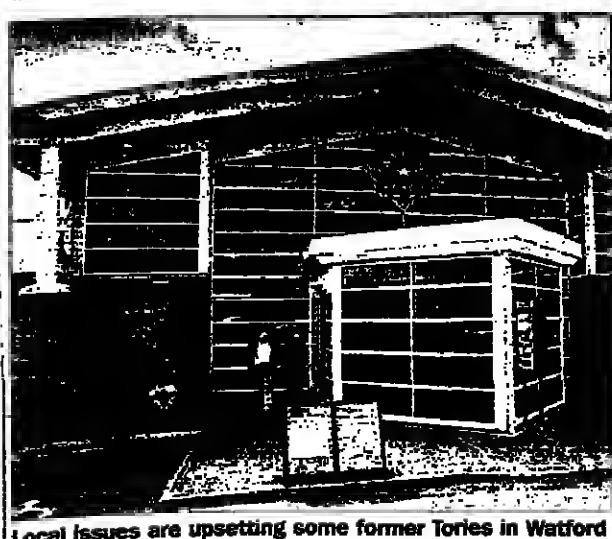
Among the former Tories who will support Labour is Edward Hain, a retired sales manager. He believes in a "Common Market", but not in a single currency or in a federal Europe. "I don't believe anybody should vote for anybody else. A month ago neither Labour, nor the Conservatives were the slightest bit interest-

ed in Europe. It's only because of the Referendum Party that they have been forced to make promises about it," he said.

Local issues are also upsetting some former Tories. Jane Seager, a mother, is angry that she has not been able to find an acceptable secondary school place for her child. She will either vote Liberal Democrat or not vote at all. "All the schools we have applied to are grant-maintained. They have been given carte blanche to do what they want by this government. I won't go blue again, but I definitely couldn't vote Labour."

Others have decided to hack new Labour. Vipul Patel, director of a software company, voted Conservative in the past. This time he will vote Labour. "They've screwed it up," he said. "It's the sleaze – it's terrible. You can't vote for someone you don't trust any more."

A former Conservative-voting factory worker, who did not want to give his name, felt the same. He, too, will probably vote Labour, though he is less sure. "My money has gone up by £10 in the last five years, and they voted themselves a 26 per cent rise," he said.



Local issues are upsetting some former Tories in Watford

John is 1520

English Tory finds no meanness on the streets of Belfast



Flying the flag: Sarah Dines, Tory candidate for East Belfast, has won many friends but probably few votes

Photograph: Pacemaker

David McKittrick on Ulster's good-natured election campaign

At 9am yesterday, Sarah Dines, Conservative candidate for East Belfast, was being hugged by John Major in Belfast city centre. At 11am she was standing in the rain in an urban republican enclave, surrounded by Sinn Féin posters and anti-British murals.

It was all a far cry from her Essex home. The Prime Minister had been enclosed in a phalanx of security but in the Short Strand, a tiny speck of Catholic green in the otherwise red white and blue Protestant sea of East Belfast, Ms Dines was accompanied only by her husband.

An energetic barrister, she has been amazed at just how different things are in Northern Ireland. "Electioneering is infinitely more civilised here than on the mainland," she said. "When I was a Basildon district councillor I had leaflets torn up in front of me. I would actually get spat on in some of the council estates. There was so much vitriol."

Belfast, by contrast, turns out to be a much more well-behaved place. "People are far nicer here," she enthused. "They are genuinely really polite and mild-mannered. The average man on the doorstep will say, 'Well, no, I'm not your supporter but

good luck to you,' and he'll smile. It's so refreshing."

East Belfast is Peter Robinson's kingdom, held by the Democratic Unionist party deputy leader for nearly two decades. There is no real chance of Ms Dines deposing him although, as she said, "if everybody who has promised to vote for me does, then I'm the next MP for East Belfast." Belfast-style courtesy extends, it seems, into the realm of the diplomatic falsehood.

The promises to vote for her have all come from Protestant districts. In Short Strand yesterday she won no pledges of support but, just as she had predicted, everyone was polite and good-mannered, and no one told her to get back to England.

Instead, two old ladies smiled and chatted amiably. "I vote for whoever I take a fancy to on the day," laughed one. "I vote for Sinn Féin, always," said the other, pleasantly enough. They were unimpressed by Ms Dines's observations that people in Northern Ireland had much more money spent on them than elsewhere in the UK: they may be polite in the Short Strand, but gratitude to British governments is in short supply.

The only thing that really scan-

dalised Ms Dines was the number of non-voters. "I don't vote at all, none of my family do," said an old lady. Another woman shook her head: "I don't vote, no. Couldn't care, to be honest with you." A local shopkeeper, a jovial man in a striped blue apron, said cheerfully: "Haven't voted for 20 years. Wife's the same."

After a string of such responses Ms Dines was almost pleading. "You should vote," she told one woman imploringly. "Women had to fight way hard to get the vote in the first place, you know." The woman was unmoved.

In a shop, Ms Dines made her pitch to a woman shop assistant who said she supported Sinn Féin. "We are the only national party here. We want an end to sectarianism, we don't care what religion or what colour you are. The fight really should be on whether you're Conservative or socialist. I wouldn't vote on the basis of religion," said the candidate. "Neither would I," said the woman, levelly.

Each made their points, then Ms Dines bought a jar of marmalade and they parted on the best of terms, leaving one to wonder why all political discourse could not be conducted in such a civilised, gracious manner.

Ashdown plea on tactical voting

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Paddy Ashdown yesterday cautioned people against tactical voting, arguing that there was no difference between Labour and the Tories.

The Liberal Democrat leader also claimed in an interview on GMTV that over the past five years his party had moved "from a party of protest to a party of government."

He said the Liberal Democrats had beaten the Conservatives into third place in local government and, as for Labour, he said: "What does Labour stand for any longer? Mr Blair

what it is we stand for, and let people choose what they want to do according to what their priorities are."

"I think that is relying on an intelligent vote from intelligent people without pushing people around."

"I am inviting people to vote Liberal Democrat and that's the only way you get the things only we now stand for. Unhappily now, with Labour offering the same policies as the Conservatives, if Labour should be elected it would not make any difference."

Without hearing that contemptuous view, Mr Blair told the day's election press conference that there was no question of any deals being done with the Liberal Democrats after Thursday.

"I am in favour of co-operating with other parties where it is in the national interest to do so," the Labour leader said. "But I am not talking pacts, deals and all the rest of it - that's not on the agenda and never has been."

Mr Ashdown told *Election Call*: "The proposition being put equally by the Conservatives and Labour is to make two impossible promises."

"Promise number one is that in the present economic climate that you can cut taxes and promise number two is that you can maintain public services. They must tell us which of those two promises they intend to break after the election, because they are unachievable."

Mr Ashdown said: "If you want to go on actually having elections based on lies, on tax promises that are betrayed straight afterwards ... vote Labour, vote Conservative, it's not going to make any difference, we won't make the long-term investments ... and we will have a system of politics which continues to decline in respect because politicians make promises which simply can't be believed and they betray straight after the election."



may know, but I'm afraid I don't, and many people don't either. They seem to be as close to the Tory party as possible ...

"Vote Labour on Thursday, Mr Blair gets to Downing Street, you change the name on the door-plate, but not a penny extra goes into your school or hospital."

Mr Ashdown's rejection of the tactical vote against the Tories was maintained on the BBC *Election Call* programme.

"What is politics about?" he asked. "What are elections about? Elections are about voting for what you believe in. If you don't vote for it you are not going to get it."

"Our job - Mr Blair, Mr Major, myself - is to put forward clearly to the British people ...

It'll be my last visit this week - John Major, asked if yesterday's trip to Belfast would be his last

That's not grown-up talk. It's not going to happen - Roy Hattersley, denying he was in line to be Leader of the House of Lords in a Blair government

I have been trying to defend Edwina on several occasions ... I must say I find it difficult on this occasion - Kenneth Clarke on Mrs Currie's prediction of a Labour landslide

Well, I'm a polite sort of guy ... Michael Heseltine's only response to the Currie question

the general picture on all the charts is that Labour should win, but it also looks like something weird ... is going to happen on polling day - Roy Gillett, chairman

QUOTES OF THE DAY

of the Astrological Association of Great Britain

Tony Blair is claiming that the Labour Party is the Referendum Party, Brian Mawhinney says it is the Tories who will deliver a referendum ... they are lying through their teeth - Sir James Goldsmith

Nil - Sir Denis Thatcher, asked about John Major's chances of winning

This isn't a landslide country. The only poll that counts is on election day - Tony Blair

Compiled by Ben Summers

BRITAIN DESERVES BITTER

BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE BITTER

BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE BITTER

election '97

Blair warns of new threat to NHS

Anthony Bevins and
Jeremy Laurance

A big increase in private medical insurance, offering a cut-price deal for the fast-track use of NHS services, would be another step towards the destruction of the health service under a fifth-term Tory government, Tony Blair warned yesterday.

The Labour leader told a party press conference: "I fear for the future of the NHS if the

Tories get back in. Brick by brick they have been dismantling the foundations on which the NHS stands. If they win, they will have a licence to kill the NHS as we know it. They must be stopped."

Mr Blair hatched his attack on leaked material from a joint private medical insurance deal, under discussion between Norwich Union and the NHS trusts. He said it supported his charge that the Tories were planning "a major expansion in the use of private health insurance as part of

the two-tier NHS".

The document speaks of targeting patients who feel guilty about abandoning the NHS but who would be prepared to pay to jump the queue for treatment. It says the new private-care policy would be sold to "socially responsible dinkies [double income, no kids] and empty nesters, such as teachers, public service personnel, politically right-on professionals and your Matthew Hardings" - a reference to the millionaire chairman

of Chelsea Football Club who gave large sums to the Labour Party before he was killed in a helicopter accident last year.

The document says these people are seeking "an acceptable way to go private" who want speed of treatment but are "far less concerned about the added frills." Their objections could be overcome by convincing them that they are supporting their local hospital and making a contribution to NHS patients, it says.

Mr Blair said in response: "Unless the people of Britain use their vote on Thursday to send a Mayday warning, there will not be a National Health Service worth the name in five years' time."

Chris Smith, Labour's health spokesman, later described the arrangement as a "sweetheart deal", prompting Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, to issue a denial through Tory party headquarters. Mr Dorrell added that he

had been in touch with the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents NHS trusts and health authorities, who had told him: "I have informed the co-chairs of the NHS Confederation that, in my view, it would not be appropriate for the confederation to be involved in promoting private medical insurance."

The leaked Norwich Union document, dated 9 December last year, says the price of policies that might be offered

should be "artificially lowered to attract new business" in the first year. But it warns of a "potential backlash by the NHS Trust Federation should we need to push through high price increases in years two and three".

The NHS Trust Federation opened negotiations with several insurance companies last year to seek ways of defending its pay-bed income of over £200m a year.

Some private insurers such as

Bupa have adopted aggressive marketing tactics excluding NHS hospitals from their schemes and offering bonuses to consultants who treat private patients in non-NHS hospitals.

The federation merged last month with the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts to form the NHS Confederation. Yesterday, the confederation said any scheme involving a private provider would have to be "re-thought" after the election.



Up in the air: Three members of the Natural Law Party demonstrate Yogic Flying in London yesterday. According to its leader, Dr Geoffrey Clements, the party aims to place "health and happiness at the centre of politics" through the practice of meditation. Photograph: Brian Harris

Straight-talking right-winger reckons he will have last say

Kathy Marks on the wit and wisdom of David Evans, man of the people

The man in the battered Fiesta caught sight of David Evans, screeched to a halt and reversed back up the road. "How yer doing, gov'nor?" he yelled. The man, who turned out to be Den Cox, owner of a local fish-and-chip shop, had stopped to wish his local MP well for Thursday. Mr Cox was full of praise for Mr Evans. "He's a great man, like a gun barrel, dead straight," he said. "You don't get no pretty words from him, you get direct talk."

It is with direct talk that the colourful Conservative MP for Welwyn Hatfield has made a name. A staunch right-winger of the hanging and flogging school, he was vilified last month for an interview with a school magazine in which he sprayed abuse in several directions.

Mr Evans, 61, described Virginia Bottomley as "dead on the neck upwards", scorned female MPs generally and said his Labour opponent, Melanie Johnson, was a "single girl" with "three bastard children" who had "never done a proper job". He also referred to a "black bastard" who had been convicted of rape.

But far from damaging his prospects in Welwyn Hatfield, where boundary changes have reduced his majority to 6,500, Mr Evans's outburst appears to have boosted his popularity. As he canvassed yesterday in Mardley Heath, an affluent area on the outskirts of Welwyn, an elderly woman threw her arms around him. "I hope to heaven you get back in," she said. "You speak your mind. I wish there were more like you."

Mr Evans shows no hint of contrition. A self-made millionaire, he loves his barrow-boy image and believes that his

comments demonstrate he is a man of the people. "The voters here know what David Evans is about, so they weren't shocked. Maybe my language was a bit colourful, but I think the meat of it was what people think. For every person round here who calls me bigoted, there's another one who says: 'You were a bit out of order' and then leans forward and whispers 'But I agree with you, mate'."

Mr Evans elaborated on his views about female MPs yesterday - they are by necessity "sub-standard", he said - and reiterated his opinion of Miss Johnson. "She lives in Cambridge with her boyfriend and three illegitimate children. I've lived here for 35 years. I'm a family man with family values. If ever there was a stark choice between two people, this is it."

Welwyn Hatfield is a barometer seat. It has never returned a Tory MP when Labour has been in power. Mr Evans said he expected to hang on.

John Redwood, for whom he was campaign manager during the leadership battle, has lent support, as has Lord Packinon. "We went into the heart of Melanie country last week," Mr Evans said. "Bandit country. I got a few mouthfuls there, I can tell you." His tirade last month at least provides a talking-point on doorsteps. "I've been your MP for 10 years and I get myself into hot water sometimes," he says by way of introduction.

The well-groomed women in the semi-detached houses of Mardley Heath are unperturbed. "I think he's just a typical man of his generation," said one. "He probably opened his mouth without thinking. My husband does it all the time."



Mr Evans door-stepping on the campaign trail yesterday. Photograph: John Lawrence

Run around the houses for would-be PM

Christian Wolmar

Tony Blair has confirmed that he will be moving into Downing Street if Labour wins the election, though it is unclear exactly where he will live in the famous street.

He has intimated to civil servants that he will be moving out of his Islington home in North London but he may delay moving for a few weeks to prepare

his family for the upheaval. However, the flat in No 10, which used to be the servants' quarters of the house, is relatively small, with four bedrooms, and much less space than the Blair's current home for him, his wife and three children. It might be possible for Mr Blair to live at No 11, which has a more spacious flat, as Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, is unmarried and has no chil-

dren. The decision by Mr Blair ends speculation that he would follow in the footsteps of Harold Wilson, the last prime minister not to live in Downing Street. During his final term of office, Wilson lived in Lord North Street. While Mr Major has lived at No 10, during the early part of his premiership his wife, Norma, remained at their home in Huntingdon.

If Downing Street is unsuit-

able, the prime minister could choose from several other government-owned flats including three at Admiralty House and the home generally occupied by the home secretary in South Easton Place. The prime minister also has the use of Chequers, the country home in Buckinghamshire.

It also emerged yesterday that civil servants do not expect Labour to have a deputy prime

minister with extensive powers, like the current incumbent, Michael Heseltine, who has a palatial office at 70 Whitehall which houses the Cabinet Office. This suggests that John Prescott will not be taking a similar role.

Labour refused to be drawn on speculation about either Mr Prescott or Mr Blair. A spokesperson said: "We have no comment to make on this."



by Aanonimus

minus three. The big cheese interviewer was interrupting too much. These things had a delicate ecology and the Candidate - while mildly irritated at the constant heckling - knew that it was his interrogator and not him who was likely to get the blame from the listeners for yet another sterile confrontation.

Even now the duty log at Broadcasting House would be gradually filling up with the complaints of Mrs Emily Bounce of Bromsgrove and Dr Roger Rott of Rochester.

His best strategy was to check his own desire to snap back, and to stay polite. One of the things that he most admired about Sadey was the way that the small Scot would rip the occasional questioner to shreds, turning the tables in a manner that was both shocking and compelling.

One budding jock had probably had his career foreshortened by a careless accusation levelled at Sadey's comrades.

Legend had it that the young man in question had left the studio white and quivering, his bloody testicles still on the floor. Regrettably, it was not the Candidate's style. "May I just be allowed a moment to answer your question, John?" he asked politely.

What the piranhas in the upper part of the pool (the warmer water, closer to the sun) wanted was new answers. These broadsheets and up-market radio johnnies were desperate for something - anything - which would turn into a running story.

Failing that, they had to fall back on the curled lip, the ironic line and the exasperated tone, indicating to those who needed to know it - their bosses, peers and families - that they were no easy touches.

He understood their needs, but it did not much matter, the replies were always the same however cleverly the questions were couched. They lodged in various cerebral cubby holes and recesses, close enough to his mouth to be instantly available when needed. Sooo enough, God willing, there would be stories for all as his new government was formed, and the Grey Man's party imploded. From now - for the next 72 hours - it was stamina that counted; the sheer bloody physical and mental toughness to keep going.

It took real effort to grind out the grins and "nice to meet you" in every single place he went. To keep on eye on whether the snappers were trying to line him up with a U-turn sign or something like that.

These broadsheet and radio johnnies were desperate for something which would turn into a story

Will power was needed not to be seduced by thoughts of what Whizz and Brother Two were doing back in London, busily making contacts and feeling their way into government. Focus! Keep going! From the interview to the press conference in the brightly coloured regional TV

studio. It seemed to be a media rule of thumb that the more primary colours a building or a newspaper was daubed in, the more essentially trivial it would be. Here, before an audience of his travelling piranhas, he engaged in a bizarre long-distance link to Mr Brown and big fish down in the capital. The disembodied voice of Uncle Herbert - for once separated from his substance - floated down the ether to accuse him jocularly of complacency. Never mind. Keep going!

Thence to a midlands university to give a quick speech to 100 friendly students; keep going. Now off to the sports field, there to ask otiose royal family type questions of sceptical rugby players, most of whom seemed friendly enough (though he could hear the inevitable nervous half-shouts of "wanker" from some of those on the fringes). Keep going.

And he was unnerved momentarily by the strange experience of hearing his own comments - made to handshakers lining his route - being amplified by the radio microphone on his tie, all for the use of the copy starved journalists in the pen. What can I usefully ask these guys about rugby? Dunno. Keep going.

On the bus and into the midlands city, a sudden pain in his guts, an appalling attack of wind. Ridiculously painful, but not an excuse to disappoint the faithful (or to create a "candidate in fatigue shock" story). Keep going!

Under the town hall and as he made his open-air address for the umpteenth time to an unusually enthusiastic crowd he looked up and spotted - on the town hall balcony - Jeremy from the BBC (who looks nothing like Jeremy from Sky TV) combing his air before performing his piece de camera. "Hell, I'm just the backdrop," thought the candidate. And kept going.

Into the helicopter and down to the London TV studios, there to be eaten by a live audience, anxious to make their minor mark on posterity or - possessed by that infuriating self righteousness with which the powerless sometimes like to get even - make a major mark on him. Never mind. Keep going.

Welsh constituency does it in threes

Tony Heath

Labour and the Liberal Democrats are slugging it out toe-to-toe in Brecon and Radnorshire, a curate's egg of a constituency boasting a history of tight three-way battles.

The major parties have all held sway there in the past 25 years. The Tory Jonathan Evans scraped in by 120 votes over the Liberal Democrat Richard Livesey in 1992 but as polling day looms a change looks highly likely.

A swing of 0.1 per cent would see Paddy Ashdown's man home. Labour needs a 4.9 per cent swing to triumph and the party's candidate, Chris Mann, points to an NOP poll for the television company HTV which puts Labour in Wales on 60 per cent, with the Tories trailing at 19 per cent, the Liberal Democrats on 9 per cent and Plaid Cymru on 12 per cent.

The pace quickened yesterday when a dozen Welsh Labour candidates - all defending majorities ranging from

5,000 to more than 20,000 - were drafted in to the Mid-Wales constituency.

They were joined by Chris Smith, the shadow health secretary, and teams were out in the three main towns of a sprawling constituency so diverse that in the south the coal mining industry is still remembered while in the north the railway station at Nighting is actually in Shropshire.

Peter Hain sits on a 23,975 majority in neighbouring Neath, which is twinned with Brecon and Radnorshire. He told shoppers in Brecon: "People who voted Liberal in 1992 ended up with a Tory MP and a Tory government. When there was a Liberal MP in the 1987 parliament he was simply ignored by the Tory government. A Labour MP backing a Labour government is the best outcome." Privately, all three parties believe they can win, but bets are being hedged. James Gibson-Wait, the Liberal Democrat agent, says cautiously: "It looks favourable, but with three days

to go funny things can happen."

Mr Evans campaigns on his record. He claims that in five years as an MP he has written to over 80,000 people - an average of 43 letters a day. "I have worked to ensure that local needs are understood by the decision makers," he says.

Labour is marginally more forthcoming. Mr Mann says that 25,000 electors have been contacted. "We are on 3 per cent, with the Liberal Democrats on 32 per cent and the Tories fading at 29 per cent."

In such a close contest the votes of Plaid Cymru's Steven Cornelius and the Referendum Party's Liz Phillips could hold the key. Ms Phillips was heartened yesterday when reports trickled through of Tory posters being replaced by hers.

Labour claims to have identified 17,000 supporters enough to snatch the victory yesterday's high-profile "hit" by candidates like Ron Davies, the shadow Welsh secretary, Ann Clwyd and Rhodri Morgan was designed to make real.

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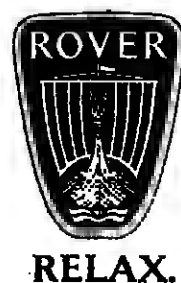
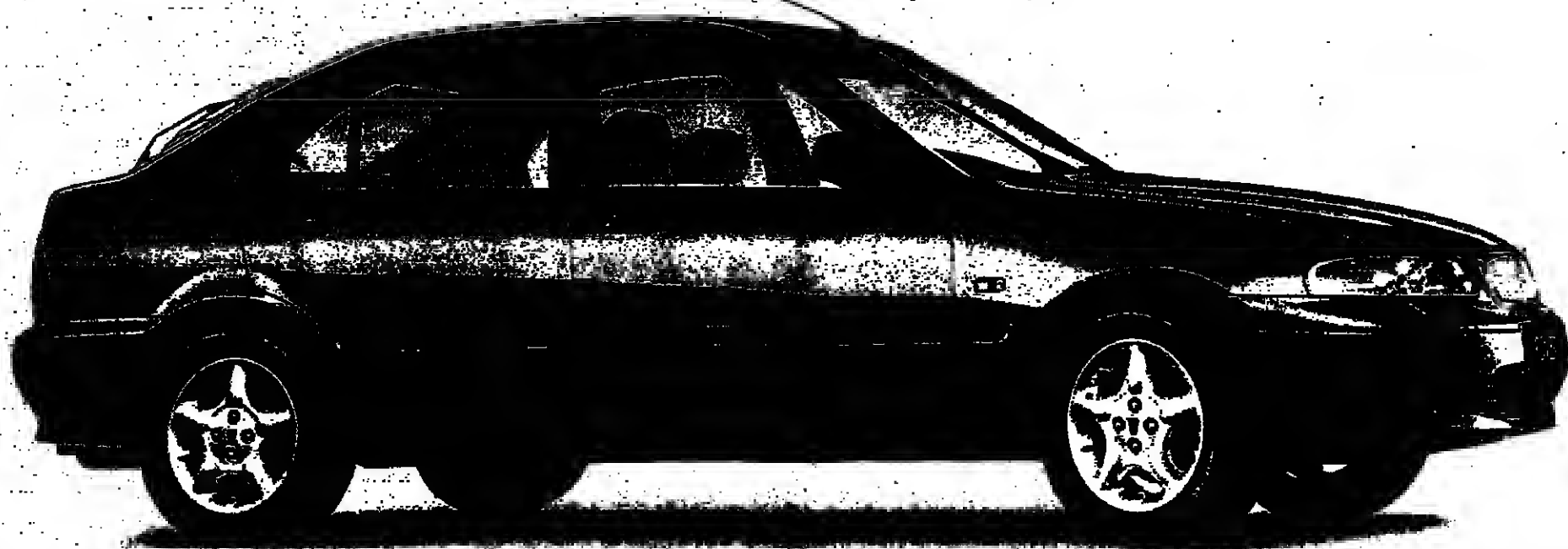
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international

Refugee crisis: As UN turns the screws on Zaire's rebel leader, troops fly out in case foreigners need to be evacuated

Pressure on Kabila to rescue lost Hutus

David Usborne
New York

The United Nations yesterday turned up the pressure on the leader of the rebel movement in Zaire, Laurent Kabila, to co-operate in repatriating tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees believed lost in the east of the country in conditions of exhaustion and deprivation.

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, issued a statement welcoming a commitment made by Mr Kabila during talks with aid officials over the weekend to support the repatriation. In an attempt to place public responsibility on the rebel leader, Mr Annan said: "The entire international community are counting on that support".

The statement followed declarations from Mr Kabila at the weekend in which he gave aid agencies 60 days to complete the repatriation effort. Mr Kabila demanded an apology from Mr

Annan for earlier accusing the rebels of waging a campaign of "slow extermination" against the refugees.

Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, also spoke out yesterday after briefing the Security Council. She said she had written to Mr Kabila asking for his assurance that reports indicating the involvement of his soldiers in attacks on refugees were unfounded. She said the 60-day deadline for the repatriation campaign was "unrealistic".

Mixed news continued to emanate from the region. On the diplomatic front, the United States ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, was due to arrive in Zaire on a mission to arrange face-to-face peace talks between Mr Kabila and President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Unicef reported that up to 50 Hutu children had been abducted from a paediatric hospital run by the British aid agency,



Peace mission: America's UN ambassador Bill Richardson whispering in an aid's ear on his arrival in Kinshasa.

Photograph: AP

Save the Children, near the Zaire-Rwanda border. Who took the children was unclear. Elsewhere, aid workers celebrated locating between 5,000 and 10,000 refugees, previously thought lost or dead, on a

road leading south from the city of Kisangani. It was the abrupt disappearance last week of an estimated 85,000 Rwandan Hutus from two refugee camps outside Kisangani that prompted Mr

Annan to ring the alarm bells about a potential humanitarian disaster. The implication of his statement was that forces loyal to Mr Kabila may have abetted the tragedy and even murdered some of the refugees.

UN sources said the UN-HCR had evidence of massacres having taken place. Officials are not convinced Mr Kabila was aware of these events. Privately, they question the role in the crisis of Paul Kagame, the defence minister of Rwanda. Considered the strongman of the Tutsi regime in Rwanda, Mr Kagame has no interest in seeing Hutu refugees brought home.

The sounding of that alarm has critically altered the perception around the world of Mr Kabila, whose forces now control over half of Zaire. The fact that international opinion may be swinging against him will not be lost on the leader.

The *Washington Post* yesterday labelled Mr Kabila the "spoiler in Zaire". In an editorial, it said: "By a cruel refugee policy, Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader in Zaire, is spoiling much of the friendly reception he might otherwise hope to reap in his country and abroad for ousting Mobutu".

Mr Annan's statement yesterday was designed to force Mr Kabila to deliver on his promise made at the weekend to help aid agencies carry out the repatriation. In private, UN officials are sceptical of Mr Kabila's word, in part because of a belief that Mr Kabila has limited control over eastern Zaire and even over his own soldiers.

British beef up forces on river

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

Two hundred more British troops and three RAF C-130 Hercules transport planes were last night heading for Libreville, Gabon, from Lyneham, Wiltshire, in case they are needed to help an estimated 800 foreign nationals get out of Kinshasa, the Ministry of Defence said yesterday.

The troops will be joining 40 Royal Marines, equipped with four "rigid Raider" boats and two hovercraft, who have been on stand-by in Brazzaville to evacuate foreigners - the first time Marine hovercraft (LCACs - "Landing Craft Air Cushion Light") have been used on active service of this kind.

Specialists from the Marines, including the Special Boat Service, and from the SAS have been poised to help evacuate foreigners across the river, two miles wide at this point and which has been flowing fast because of heavy rain. The river has gently sloping sandy banks, which make it ideal for hovercraft. Recent photographs indicate a number of motorised dug-out canoes and a single elderly ferry are the only indigenous transport.

Military sources said the SBS and other Marines, who are experts in the use of small craft and inflatable boats, and would be used to evacuate VIPs, could not evacuate 800 people, and this would be the responsibility of the three Hercules.

The commander of the British forces in Zaire is Brigadier Jonathan Thomson, Royal Marines, the chief of Joint Rapid Deployment Force Operations.

Vote gives Prodi a crumb of comfort

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

Provisional results from this weekend's local elections confirmed the deep structural paralysis at the heart of Italian politics yesterday, with neither of the two main coalition blocs making significant gains over the other and small fringe parties holding enormous sway over the final outcome.

The good news for Romano Prodi's centre-left government was that it did not go down to crashing defeat, as some had predicted, after a year of weak leadership and enormous sacrifices demanded of the people in an attempt to qualify on time for the European monetary union.

But the centre-right opposition, led by the former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and the reformed neo-Fascist leader Gianfranco Fini, could claim only the most tenuous of leads, since most of the biggest prizes on offer will have to be decided in a run-off in two weeks' time.

In the big economic centres of the north, the opposition was ahead in Milan and Turin but trailing in Trieste.

The biggest gains, meanwhile, were registered by the far-left protest party Rifondazione Comunista, the group Mr Prodi has been forced to accommodate to make up a majority in the lower house of parliament but whose ideological posturings have made life hell for him.

Most of the big prizes on offer will be decided in a run-off in two weeks' time

Already yesterday the leader of Rifondazione, Fausto Bertinotti, was warning that the forthcoming round of negotiations on welfare reform, which are deemed essential if Italy is to qualify for the single European currency, would only win his support if they did not entail any public spending cuts. That stance, if it is maintained, will sabotage any serious

attempts at reform and will almost certainly bring down Mr Prodi's government.

The evident paralysis is good news in one sense, since an extraordinary cross-party commission is currently drawing up changes to the constitution in an attempt to make Italy more governable. The election results might just spur them into making intelligent electoral reforms.

The big loser this weekend was another fringe party, the Northern League, whose calls for secession from the rest of Italy sealed its defeat in Milan, where it had occupied the mayor's office. The party was defeated also in a host of other northern cities and provinces.

The League's mercurial leader, Umberto Bossi, seemed unperturbed by his party's poor showing. Indeed, he positively crowed about the defeat of mayor Marco Formentini in Milan, since Mr Formentini is an outspoken opponent of secession.

Asked whom the League would support in the second round, he said the party would not even bother to campaign. "We'll send everybody off to the mountains," he said.

Rejected Slovaks accept Russian bear's embrace

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

Three days seems an unusually long time for any foreign head of government to spend in the small central European state of Slovakia. When the visitor is Russia's Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, one could be forgiven for thinking that something is afoot.

Mr Chernomyrdin, who arrived in the Slovak capital, Bratislava, yesterday, is expected to sign no fewer than 12 agreements with the Slovak government, covering trade, co-operation between the Russian and Slovak central banks, science and technology, and arms production.

The deals go some way beyond anything that Russia has agreed with other Central European countries, notably the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. They indicate that Russia regards Slovakia as its best friend in the region.



Chernomyrdin: Bringing 12 deals from Moscow

The reason for Moscow's enthusiastic interest in Slovakia is not hard to find. Alone in Central Europe, Slovakia is unlikely to receive an invitation from Nato next July to join the Atlantic alliance in 1999.

Western governments have serious doubts about the quality of Slovak democracy under its populist Prime Minister,

Vladimir Meciar, and they consequently believe that Slovakia should reform itself before earning a Nato invitation.

Russia, spotting its chance, has stepped in.

According to the Russian ambassador to Slovakia, Sergei Zotov, the Russian-Slovak arms accords could be far-reaching enough to complicate any future attempt by Slovakia and Nato to get together.

Moreover, Russia has an exceptionally strong card to play, in that Slovakia depends on the Russians for almost all its gas supplies.

However, many Slovaks are alarmed at the implications of such a close relationship with Russia. They include the head of state, President Michal Kovac, who is Mr Meciar's sworn political enemy. Liberal Slovaks would prefer to bind their country to Western institutions. The effect of Mr Meciar's policies has been to push Slovakia towards the Russian bear-hug.

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UN dove brings hope to desert's lost tribe



Robert Fisk
in the Sahara
witnesses the
second-coming
of Baker the
peacemaker

Wilaya Smara camp, south-west Algeria — It was a scene from the days of Empire. The people of the western Sahara clapped and ululated as the tall, square-headed, sweating, silver-haired sahib strode into their midst, the representative of the greatest power on earth. In theory, this was the United Nations. In reality, it was the United States.

"Iraq No, Morocco Yes. Why?" a billboard asked above James Baker's head. Was he not the US Secretary of State who ordered Iraq to end its occupation of Kuwait seven years ago? And would not the same James Baker, now special envoy to the UN Secretary-General, now have come to order Morocco to end its 22-year occupation of the western Sahara?

So it was that the supplicant refugees — the 140,000 Saharawis in Algeria whose Polisario guerrillas had harried the Moroccan army for 16 years until their 1991 ceasefire — stood in the desert sandstorm outside Tindouf as Mr Baker, slayer of the Iraqi army and nemesis of Saddam Hussein, arrived in majesty.

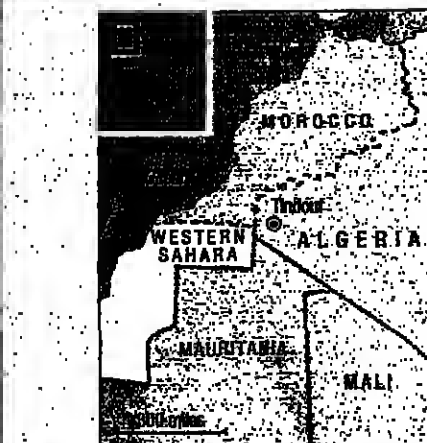
He emerged from his jeep sporting a peaked UN cap; perhaps aware that this made him look like an incongruous baseball star, he took it off within seconds.

And there, bronzed beneath the sun, stood the man who would decide their fate, he who faced down the Beast of Baghdad, a sudden flourish of his left hand freeing half a dozen white doves which fluttered above us to cries of approval from the sand-blazed masses. Many are the ageing British proconsuls — sent to the far corners of Asia to adjudicate on tribal frontiers — who would have understood the gesture.

We didn't see these doves back in 1991, of course, but this was the new model James Baker, peacemaker extraordinaire. He came ready to listen — or so he repeatedly told the exiled and Ruritanian "government" of the western Sahara — to the Saharawis and Moroccans, the Algerians and, oo doubt, to the United States of America.

What the Polisario want is their own independent state in the western Sahara, along with its phosphates and rich fishing grounds. But King Hassan of Morocco, Commander of the Faithful, is still offering the Saharawis only limited autonomy.

Algeria, the Polisario's tradition-



Desert welcome: A Saharawi refugee on a camel (left) chants and waves during James Baker's visit to the Smara refugee camp, yesterday (Photograph: Reuters). Top: A woman and children outside their stone house (Photograph: Robert Fisk)

al supporter, does not want to give King Hassan any territorial victories, but it is now distracted by a savage internal war.

Much more to the point, King Hassan remains one of Washington's faithful allies in the Middle East. He is one of the few Arab leaders who is still on speaking terms with the Israelis, oo that the "peace process" — initiated way back in 1991 by a man called James Baker — is dead.

Is Mr Baker, therefore, going to support the demands of the destitute and sick refugees — people whose east European support dried up with the collapse of the Iron Curtain — against America's royal friend in Rabat?

Pathetically, the Saharawis in their blue and black robes, shrieking their welcome from the sides of the track through the desert, their ramshackle army wiping the sand from beneath their tin helmets, believed that the steel-hearted Mr Baker might be swayed by their obvious emotions.

"Surely when he sees our people like this, he will understand our suffering and our need for independence," a Polisario factotum, cowed in a black shawl, vouchsafed to us. As he spoke, a flurry of American military personnel — blue-beretted, but with very large US shoulder flashes — pushed their way through the

crowd. "Mr Baker is a powerful man — and we need a powerful man to help us," he said. Nearby another billboard proclaimed: "Mr Baker — remember Big Fish versus Small Fish."

But powerful men understand weakness as well as strength, and it was the Big Fish of Morocco who opened the Maghreb to Israel (even if it is now planning to close the Rabat-based secretariat in charge of Middle East economic summits). And it was Algeria which organised the final return of America's embassy hostages in Tehran a long decade ago.

Despite the presence of a well-maintained Russian BMP armoured vehicle — crewed by Polisario men —

close to James Baker's jeep, Algeria has oo desire for a continuation of the war.

It must have come as a relief for Mr Baker when he entered the straw-roofed chamber of a stone desert house to meet the sheikhs of the Polisario's four refugee camps in south-west Algeria, the nearest the Saharawi people have come to democracy in exile.

Tired and unsmiling, he later emerged from talks with the Polisario's "president", Mohamed Abdull-Aziz, to say all the right things: that he was impressed by his welcome, that it was a tough problem but not a hopeless one — "or else I wouldn't

be here" — and that this was merely a fact-finding trip.

He welcomed the "very, very generous humanitarian gesture of support for my mission" — the release of just 85 out of 2,000 Moroccan prisoners, some of whom have been held for 21 years in the desert, by the aforesaid "president".

Then he went on to add that if the UN's own peace plan — which includes a referendum of Saharawis in Algeria and in Moroccan-ruled western Sahara, prisoner exchanges, and a reduction of troops — could not work, then he would have to advise the UN Secretary-General oo "what other steps could be taken".

And there's the rub. For what is likely to have interested Mr Baker is the degree of war-weariness of a people who left their homes 22 years ago for the most arid desert in the world. Left their homes to live in heat and dust, drinking the filthiest water the UN has ever come across in its history of refugee assistance, their teeth and bones brittle from lack of vitamins and too much nitrogen in the water. War-weariness is a vital element of refugee morale.

After all, were the Palestinians not weak and war-weary when Mr Baker invited them to make peace with Israel in 1991?

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Ashdown in action makes the case for change

"Mummy, what is that man for?" If we apply the classic test to Paddy Ashdown, the answer has to be that his purpose is to open up the possibilities of British politics. It is too simple to say, as many Labour politicians do, that the Liberal Democrats enjoy the luxury of being able to adopt positions which are only capable of winning minority support. This assumes that the way to win elections is, like a boxer, to get ahead on points and then bury your head in your opponent's chest so that he cannot hit you. Tony Blair assumes that any party seriously aspiring to win a majority of seats in the House of Commons cannot, for example, advocate higher taxes to pay for better public services. If it were not for the Liberal Democrats, the middle ground of politics would be defined by a conspiracy between the two largest parties, and the election campaign would be even more stifling than it has been.

The Liberal Democrats have stretched the envelope of public debate. It may be that Labour has been forced into its hedgehog position on tax only because of its past history, and voters' distrust of it. It may be that a different tax policy could win the assent of a majority if it came from a different party. And some aspects of the Liberal Democrats' policy are commendable. There are in fact two elements. One of simple redistribution: higher income tax

on those earning more than £100,000 to cut tax for those on lower earnings. And one of honesty about public finances: higher income tax generally to pay for increased spending on education.

Using the tax system modestly to close the gap between the better-off and the poor would have been a long-overdue token of a new public ethic. And, although a penny on the standard rate of income tax is far from the best way to raise it, the Liberal Democrats are to be praised for their directness in saying that better public services have to be paid for – something Mr Blair, head down, gloves up to his face, cannot say, despite the words "Education, education, education" stitched on his banner. Mr Ashdown makes the same point ("Sp on a packet of fags") in relation to the National Health Service, which, as *The Independent* has reported in recent days, does not meet our aspirations for it, despite hugely increased real resources over the past 18 years.

Mr Blair may be right that Labour cannot win as a tax-and-spend party, but his argument is logically flawed: just because Middle Income Britain has "suffered enough" from tax rises does not mean it is wrong to put taxes up more. At least, because of Mr Ashdown, Mr Blair has been forced to try to justify himself.

In some ways, of the three national party leaders, Mr Ashdown has had the best campaign – certainly the most



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enjoyable one. Realistically, he will not be prime minister on Friday. So his role is not to play at being prime minister, but to act out the possibilities which could be encompassed by a candidate prime minister. Occasionally, the necessary pretence that he could form a government has slipped. Mr Ashdown has been teased by *The Independent's* Anthony Bevis for not knowing what was in his 1992 manifesto and by *Newsnight's* Michael Crick for not running a campaign in Meriden, which he needs to win for a Lib Dem majority in the Commons. But it has been a good performance. He has argued with passion and

clarity that every single Liberal Democrat vote will count as a vote for more resources for education and health.

Interestingly, what he has not said with anything like the same force is that every Lib Dem vote will dramatise the case for a fairer electoral system. Perhaps this is because he recognises that electoral reform is not a vote-winner. Perhaps it is because he fears that if Mr Blair is pushed on the issue, he would take an even more negative stance than simply being "not persuaded" of the case for electoral reform. Either way, it remains one of the most compelling reasons for voting Liberal Democrat. Every

additional vote for Mr Ashdown's party piles on the pressure to persuade Mr Blair that the present system disfigures our democracy, and to hold a Labour government to its pledge to consult the people in a referendum before the next general election.

Like the pledges on education and health spending, this fact also tends to appeal to anti-Conservative tactical voters. Thus Mr Ashdown has extracted every possible drop of advantage from what seemed three years ago to be an unpromising strategic position. When Mr Blair came to the Labour leadership, one of the first things he did was to launch an all-out assault on Lib Dem territory, including laying claim to the Liberal tradition of Keynes and Beveridge. For a moment it looked as if the Liberal Democrats would not survive the boxer's bear-hug. But Mr Ashdown's repositioning of his party has worked – he ended "equidistance" and robustly asserted a form of social democracy which now lies well to the left of New Labour.

This has produced a bizarre situation where most Labour Party members find their core beliefs publicly reflected better by the Lib Dems than by their own leadership. This seems to have done nothing to prevent disaffected Tories switching to the Lib Dems, while leaving Mr Ashdown's party poised to benefit from tactical voting from Labour supporters. Indeed, it is possible that the

Liberal Democrats could sweep from their Celtic fastnesses across almost the entire West Country.

It may be that what we will see on Thursday in the rest of the country will be a shallow Labour landslide, in which Mr Blair wins a substantial parliamentary mandate on a negative, anti-Tory and unenthusiastic vote. If that is the case, then the case is even stronger for as many Liberal Democrat MPs as possible to be elected, to stiffen the progressive resolve of a Blair government.

First to the lifeboats

He's still standing: bug-eyed with exhaustion, abandoned by most of his senior ministers and spin-doctors, John Major is fighting the final few days of a desperate campaign almost single-handed. We have been hard on him in the past, but this is real courage, and commands respect. What does not, though, is the spectacle of so many flatterers and sycophants who served him so enthusiastically in the good times now abandoning him to his fate – leaving him to it, while they prepare their leadership campaigns and gossip about who is to blame for the defeat. You would have thought, after all this time, they owed him more. What rats.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consultant: why I cannot trust Tories

Sir: I was the surgeon mentioned in your front page article "The truth about health" (25 April).

The period about which Mrs Butler spoke was during a time when there were enormous changes taking place within St Helier, the hospital being among the first wave to attain trust status. There was a great deal of "restructuring", with wards being closed or moved and much insecurity among the staff.

During this time the urology ward (in common with the whole hospital) had problems recruiting and retaining staff. Because of ward closures there were bed shortages and extra beds were often put in the patients' day room (a situation which still occurs) further putting pressure on the reduced number of staff. Mrs Butler is probably right in her description of the ward at that time.

Some wards are still understaffed, although the urology ward is now well staffed and well run and is a credit to the hospital and the NHS, and this is through the dedication and hard work put in by all the ward staff.

From a personal point of view, I would say that the medical staff have a surprisingly good relationship with their managers, although there have been times when there have been major disagreements. However, together they have made St Helier a very successful trust. The hospital has done everything asked of it following the 1991 health reforms – reduced in-patient beds yet increased throughput, increased the percentage of day-surgery procedures, provided outreach clinics in fundholding practices, privatised catering and cleaning services etc.

However, to enable this to occur all departments have had to make savings year-on-year and have been pared down to the bone; there is no leeway in staff numbers or facilities to cope with fluctuations due to increased emergency admissions. Morale in general is low and the trust has been dealt a severe blow by the local purchasing authority, who do not have enough money to fund the amount of elective surgery necessary to keep waiting times under a year. This has led to yet another ward closure to save money.

In my specialty, urology, the whole team has worked extremely hard to reduce waiting times to around 9 months for routine cases, but we have just been told in the new round of contracts that patients in the routine category must wait 18 months before being admitted. We are to lose another four beds on my ward. No wonder staff (and patients) get angry and frustrated with the statistics that flow out from the politicians. I do not know whether I can trust Tony Blair and a Labour government, but I do know I cannot trust John Major and another Tory government.

CHRISTOPHER R JONES FRCS
Consultant Urologist
St Helier Hospital
Carnarvon, Surrey

Sir: Friday's front page featured the dreadful plight of Mr and Mrs Butler who have, it seems, received appalling health care. You then went on to assume their case was typical in order to tell your readers "The truth about health". As a fellow cancer sufferer I can assure you that unlike the Butlers I have received superb care from my GP (not a fund-holder), from the staff



at the Royal Free and from the district nursing service.

So what do these two stories tell us? First, that parts of the health service are very poor indeed and have to be improved. Second, that it cannot be judged on an anecdotal basis using selected cases.

ADRIAN STUNGO
London NW3

Sir: The "truth" about health, education, you name it, is that we, the electorate, want something for nothing. In 1992 voters blanched and voted Tory on hearing rumours of a Labour income tax increase: today neither party dare mention the words. The result will be taxation by any means except the fairest, namely income tax – and it will be our own fault.

JULIA CULSHAW
Uppingham, Rutland

Record what witnesses say

Sir: For a number of years my collaborator, Anthony Heaton-Armstrong, and I have been advocating the introduction of rules requiring the police to tape-record the taking of all potentially contentious witness statements. This is not generally done at present and, although Home Office guidelines rather inadequately suggest that in serious cases it may be "beneficial" to do so, there is no firm check upon what a prosecution witness actually said to the police when making a written statement.

The result is that material differences between that statement and evidence given by the witness in court later are often exploited in impugning the witness's reliability

of being attributed to defective transcription on the part of the officer taking the statement. It is widely accepted among criminal lawyers that this may be the single most common cause of wrongful acquittals.

We expanded on this topic in our recent article in your columns ("A sounder system", 16 April) and argued that if the parties were serious in their commitment to law and order issues they could demonstrate it through an election pledge to implement our proposal. I have since been in contact with Alun Michael, Labour police affairs spokesman, who has, I gather, consulted Gordon Brown. Understandably enough, Labour's position is that no firm pledge can be given at this stage, since there has been no opportunity to cost the measure. Happily, however, I have been informed that they agree with it in principle and, subject to examining the question of cost (or savings), intend giving it serious consideration if they win.

DAVID WOLCHOVER
London NW11

Loud men

Sir: I agree with Mair Gaunt (letter, 26 April) about the discomfort of high sound levels. I find that men have the sound level on the television turned up to a degree that I find impossible to tolerate – could that be due to the better hearing women have?

GERALDINE O'FARRELL
Woking, Surrey

Cuts in British knowledge

Sir: The Government's planned cuts in the funding of higher education have been curiously absent from the election debate so far. With a 30 per cent participation rate, a good proportion of families in the country are involved, so there should be an awareness of the prospects for those who would like their children to have proper educational opportunities when they reach 18.

When ministers are asked about the cuts, they usually recite: "It is perfectly reasonable for a public service to find efficiency gains of 3 per cent per year." What this government is planning for is a progressively less well supported knowledge base for this country. This they term an "efficiency gain".

Parents with 13-year-old children must expect that under current plans higher education will be worse off in five years' time by at least 15 per cent, and that this will mean larger classes, fewer current books in the libraries, worse access to computer and laboratories facilities, and so on. These difficulties for students will be exacerbated by the pressure exerted by funding models in which anything except a narrowly defined high performance in research will be rewarded by severe cuts.

Professor RONALD BROWN
School of Mathematics
University of Wales
Bangor

Science Museum Nimby's hit back

Sir: Local residents who fear that the Science Museum's huge new Wellcome Wing will reduce the amount of daylight entering their windows are portrayed in Jonathan Glancey's article "The outer darkness" (25 April) as reactionaries standing in the way of progress. The residents of 169 Queen's Gate, described in the article as "anonymous" and living in a "grandiose block of late Victorian mansion flats", come in for particular opprobrium.

These same residents have publicly stated their support for the Wellcome Wing on several occasions. What concerns them is not that the new building will exist, but that it is oriented in such a way as to shadow their living rooms and bedrooms. They have merely asked for their right to adequate daylight to be considered. If this is Nimbyism, how would Mr Glancey describe the actions of anti-motorway protesters?

The article does not even mention the major issue. For dozens of residents in the surrounding streets, the main problem is not the Wellcome Wing but the separate industrial-style block which the museum has proposed for its new conference centre in Queen's Gate itself.

The local council has now asked the Science Museum to submit a more suitable design. To represent this as a triumph for a handful of

Luddites who are "suspicious of science" is absurd.

Jonathan Glancey should check his facts before sneering at the community spirit of ordinary people who want this multicultural part of London to remain beautiful.

DAVID WICKES
Chairman, 169 Queen's Gate Ltd
London SW7

Out of his misery

Sir: I find it astonishing that after six and a half years as Prime Minister Mr Major seems anxious to continue in the job.

When you think of all he has had to contend with – the undoing of the poll tax fiasco, the ERM debacle, the arms-to-Iraq scandal, ministers caught with their trousers down the BSE catastrophe, the E coli disaster, the revelations about organophosphates in the Gulf, the constant sniping of the Eurosceptics – it will surely be an act of kindness if we vote him out of office on 1 May and let him have some peace and quiet.

THOMAS DUNCAN
Stokeley,
North Yorkshire

Race winner

Sir: Rupert Cornwell's article on race (25 April) reminded me of the many times when, travelling in and out of Malaysia in the 1960s, filling in the immigration form and answering the question on race, I inserted 100 metres or a suitable variation. No one ever queried it.

B T KINNESLEY
Lincoln

Why not force them to vote?

Sir: Pouring scorn upon the young for their alleged lack of interest in politics ignores a larger issue of voter apathy. If polls are to be believed (hush your sniggering), then the 49 per cent commitment to vote quoted by Polly Toynbee (28 April) is higher than the turnout at most American presidential elections.

I have not seen any serious debate about making voting at a general election compulsory, as it is in Australia. I well remember my first visit to the polling booth. Poised in silence, in private, about to pass judgement on how my country was to be ruled, it was like worship at a secular altar. Now that really was "cool". A few years afterwards, a group from the University's Chinese community stood outside the Union building one morning handing out white flowers in memory of the first-time voters who died in Nanamun Square. Polynesian of this kind makes one a committed voter.

Dr NANU GREWAL
Oriel College
Oxford

Sir: Polly Toynbee's anger at the anger, indifference or plain stupidity of some young non-voters is welcome, if tardy. She suggests explanations: Thatcher, dumb-down yof culture, patronising broadcasting. So what can we do? In a hi-tech, multi-media, anything-goes society it is essential that all young minds are thoroughly trained in judgement, even before work skills are imparted. Preposterous as it may seem, we shall have to start making the compulsory teaching of philosophy – in some palatable and enthralling way – a prerequisite in all schools.

IAN FLINTOFF
London SW6

Greens off screen

Sir: Bearing in mind the BBC's policy of virtually excluding any serious coverage of the smaller parties, the Party Election Broadcast is the single opportunity they get to present their case on national television.

The idea advocated in your leading article (28 April) of adopting the American system of paid advertising would in effect eliminate green politics from the airwaves, as we certainly could not afford prime-time advertising.

We agree that attention to things like who should qualify for a broadcast, what the criteria should be and who should set them is long overdue. It is because so many minor parties are qualifying for broadcasts now that Local Election Broadcasts were scrapped – a bitter blow for the Greens, who are fielding sufficient candidates in the county council elections to meet the usual criteria.

PETER BARNETT
Director of Communications
The Green Party
London N19

New Butskellism

Sir: In the Fifties, the Keynesian-welfarist consensus between the Chancellor of the Exchequer, R A Butler, and the shadow Chancellor Hugh Caskell, was called Butskellism. Now both the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, and shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown are promising no tax rises and better public services. Should we call this Clonskellism?

TERRY MARSH
Basildon, Essex

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essay

They have friends — but can they make enemies?

What is New Labour? It's a fresh, youthful leader in a crisp white shirt, evidently decent, engagingly optimistic and — even after many weeks of campaigning, still new. It is Millbank Tower, the blind-shaded symbol of sophisticated campaigning. It is Peter Mandelson's sphinx smile in the shadows. It is "traditional values in a modern setting".

It is, in sum, an opposition campaign, not a new philosophy or a blueprint for governing. Now, unless all our polled fellow citizens are compulsive, secretive liars, New Labour is on the verge of power. That means it will change. What- ever you thought New Labour meant, it is unlikely to mean in the future.

Up to now, New Labour has defined itself first and foremost as Not Old Labour. It isn't the closed shop. It isn't nationalisation. It isn't high taxes. It isn't incompetence, extremism, retreat. It isn't failure, failure, failure. Instead, it is an electable repudiation of the past. (And how.)

In government, however, Old Labour becomes a meaningless adversary. It is yesterday's enemy. Yes, there will be left-wing rebels. Yes, there will be trade union try-ons, upon which Tony Blair will trample easily and cheerfully. But there will not be a leftist economic and social programme, in opposition to which Blair can constantly define himself as new, fresh, different. How could there be? He himself has killed it.

In government, it isn't exciting or novel to be pro-business: it becomes a question of which businesses you are pro, and how. In government, prudent fiscal policy isn't something for interviewers and floating voters, but a painful and bruising monthly struggle. In government, being "patriotically pro-European" doesn't help you much when it comes to hard negotiating choices.

In government, the wizard campaigning and the tight central control of the Leader of the Opposition's Office become redundant. All those gleaming Millbank computers instantly become as useful as the last war's fighters. New Labour may have been a brilliant way of stopping the Conservatives getting away with it again. It has not yet become a way of governing.

What will happen when it does? One way of looking at the Blair project today is to compare it to the state of Margaret Thatcher's party and project in 1979. There are similarities: she came in, looking new and surprising (a woman, after all) during a wave of revulsion and boredom with the old Labour establishment. We did not know quite what she was up to. She was surrounded by shadowy thinkers and policy wonks. Thatcher then had about as much respect for

New Labour has widened its appeal by turning its back on the past and limiting its goals. But in government, says Andrew Marr, it will need to confront bigger tasks and greater foes

the Heath and Macmillan-era Tory party as Blair has for the late Eric Heffer. Like Blair, her ideas were not fully formed in 1979. Thatcherism evolved in power, as Margaret Thatcher's character and ideology seized the opportunities.

This Thatcher comparison is one that Blair's people quite like. Most of them grew up during the Thatcher era and it is hardly surprising, perhaps, that her memory is invoked as a model for strong leadership, if nothing else.

For that reason, it is worth analysing the lessons of Thatcher's radical Toryism. The big lesson is obvious — that successful governments need a clear sense of leadership and a deliverable agenda. Thatcher may not have known how she was going to liberalise, deregulate Britain, but she knew that was what she wanted to do.

There is no doubt who is in charge of New Labour. But what does it want to do? Actually, we know a lot. It has clear policy pledges on school class sizes; getting 250,000 young unemployed people into training and work; fast-track punishment for young criminals and improvements to the health service. These, alongside the constitutional promises, give the party's position a clarity that the Conservatives lacked in 1979.

This means we can judge Blair, at least partly, by whether he delivers on a limited number of plausible, realistic and specific promises. Given the cynicism about politics now, it is hard to overstate the possible importance of this. Imagine feeling that voting gave you a contract with government, which ministers then actually delivered. Imagine an election in 2002 during which we were able to compare his performance with his original guarantee.

This could be one way of reconnecting the unplugged democracy. Labour's gimmicky-looking pledge card could, if things worked out, be a kind of grand anti-cynicism campaign. If the classes were sorted out, the reforms accomplished and the health service recognisably improved, that would be a fool-proof definition of success.

Blair's pledge list is a relatively modest one, and certainly less than a full five-year programme. What else would New Labour do? That will partly depend on what confronts it. The first Thatcher term, after all, was mostly shaped by the way in which she exploited events and challenges — stumbling on privatisation, smashing the miners, confronting the French and Germans over Britain's EC budget contribution.

There was a shape to her reactions because she had a project, a sense of direction. So what is the project, the bigger idea, to which Blair will be able to refer when crises (which are, in politics, opportunities) occur?

"Traditional values in a modern setting." Yesterday he called those "a fair deal, social justice". Excellent. But how do you keep pushing social justice forward when the windfall tax has been spent, and Gordon Brown is lashed to stern macro-economic positions inherited from the Conservatives, and it is an unforgetting world out there? After all, Blair's comfortable, "modern-sounding" "modern setting" includes global pressure on tax rates and regulation; fierce competition between labour markets; and fast punishment for defaulters.

Part of the unspoken bargain voters will be making with Blair is that he, Brown, Robin Cook and the others will do their best; that when hard choices come, they will remember the bottom dog. That would be very welcome. It's what this country needs. But it will still be, in essence, a defensive response, far removed from the political blitzkrieg of Thatcherism.

Put it another way: she knew who her enemies were, and she knew she could beat them. A persistent niggle about New Labour is that it has no enemies, except for a few oafs at Conservative Central Office, and some reassuringly vague abstract nouns such as "pessimism" and "despair". Blair's embrace can seem implausibly wide: his is a coalition in which lions snuggle down with lambs, ancient foes are reconciled and a smooth surface of freshly laid optimism blankets old wounds.

I hope that part of the answer is that Labour would tackle excessive concentrations of power — at home, in Brussels, in the City and so on. That requires a willingness to pick fights with powerful players, real, rising forces in society. Blair's harshest critics will laugh. Yet he has been electioneering, not governing, and maybe different rules apply. Certainly, the Thatcher parallel reminds us of the importance of doing things in power. And that means making enemies.



Blair's pledge list is a relatively modest one, and certainly less than a full five-year programme. What else would New Labour do?

Photomontage: Mark Heyman

There is one final aspect of the Thatcher comparison that is worth brooding on as the country waits to go to the polls. It could be called the character of government. People often forget that Margaret Thatcher came to power pledged to make government less oppressive; to pass power back down to local authorities; to smash up the quangos. She wasn't going to be a hully. And yet things did not quite turn out that way.

She was not a pluralist politician; she was a singular one. She developed a strong protective inner court which kept her away from a party of faint hearts and doubters. It made for a bunkered vision and eventually cut her off from the country as well. So when Blairites say they admire her style, it is perhaps reasonable for the rest of us to say: yes, but...

One can play the game of 1979-1997 historical casting terribly easily: Blair plays Thatcher; Gordon Brown plays Geoffrey Howe; the press secretary Alastair Campbell plays Bernard Ingham; Peter Mandelson plays Gordon Reece; Jonathan Powell plays his big brother Charles Powell; and Paul Johnson plays Paul Johnson.

But where does it lead? Does it, for instance, imply that the current shadow cabinet in 1997 already contains Labour equivalents of the "wets" whom Thatcher sacked in the early 1980s in order to create her revolution? Are there people who will play the roles of Jim Prior, Peter Walker and Francis Pym?

Do we suppose that Blair will try to exercise absolutist control on his ministers and their

departments — that the Millbank electoral campaign will be a dry run for government? Will the press be thumped with Ingham-like abandon?

That would be a sad and bad error of political style. This country needs a new leadership with more openness and generosity. We need a real fresh start — not another dark and petty Renaissance court perched atop an electoral landslide. A political style based on Thatcher might hold the attention of *The Sun* for a time but would repel the intellectual energy and real enthusiasm that any centre-left project requires.

So what is New Labour? A proposition, that's all, a sketch of a better future, a chance to start afresh. It is a changed party that is about to change the country.

How? New Labour will either prove to be a new kind of populist-conservative government, offering a slightly better deal to the users of state schools and hospitals, cracking down on the drugs, and running the country in a highly centralised, conventional way. The tone of Labour's campaigning would suggest that this is the likely outcome. The alternative outcome is the same... except that New Labour is also politically radical, liberating and pluralist — that it escapes from the old grey philistinism of British politics, takes on some of the corporate baronies, reforms the voting system and fights to democratise the EU.

In the end, it's a question for that smiling, white-shirted newcomer. A simple one: how big is his ambition?



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People with very unusual jobs indeed.

No 71: A man who subtitles films in West Country dialect.

"I was bilingual when I was at school. I spoke English and I spoke the local West Country dialect. They tried to beat the West Country dialect out of me but now at last I am putting it to good use."

The speaker is Brian Ackhead, who must be the only person in the world who is paid to subtitle films in West Country dialect. He does this for local film societies, for TV companies who are trying to pitch for a regional franchise in the West, for film preservation societies and for West Country folk societies who would rather watch, say, *Gone With The Wind* or *Key Largo* in a local dialect. (*Key Largo* is, in fact, known as *Key Largo* in the Bristol area, in accordance with the local habit of putting the letter "l" after final vowels. Other Bristol titles include *Last Tango in Paris* and *Cat Ballou*...)

"We have all been brainwashed into believing that American is the basic

dialect of the English-speaking world. We all understand the way Americans speak in films, though it is rather a different matter if you actually go to America. But we forget that it doesn't work the other way round. Americans on the whole do not understand the way we British talk. The reason that they wanted to remake things like *Till Death Do Us Part* for American TV was not so much that they wanted to tone it down a bit, as that they couldn't understand a word Alf Garnett was saying.

Americans sometimes subtitle their own films, especially when it is black ghetto dialogue. They sometimes subtitle British films. So why shouldn't we subtitle American films in West Country dialect?"

Yes, but... "I'll give you another example. The Scottish accent. Now, although I am British I find it difficult to understand a Glaswegian. Imagine how hard an American would find it. In fact, there is a well-authenticated story that when Bill Forsyth was trying



Miles Kingston

to get Burt Lancaster to agree to act in *Local Hero*, he took him out to lunch to soft-talk him into the role, and a friend asked Burt Lancaster afterwards how they had got on, and Burt Lancaster said, 'I don't know — I couldn't understand a word Forsyth said.' So you see, we don't understand each other any better, do we?"

Yes, but... "Of course, you will turn round to me and say, quite rightly, 'Yes, but what is a West Country dialect? Is it Wiltshire? Is it Devon? Is it

Bristolian?' Well, I haven't quite frankly got time to be too pedantic about that. Once you start looking at grassroots, you can find infinite differences. I mean, Bristol and Bath are only 15 miles apart, but you can quite easily distinguish the different ways the respective inhabitants speak. Now, I'm not going to go subtitling films in a different way for Bath and Bristol, so what I've got to do is find a generalised sort of Western way of speaking."

Yes, but... "I know what you're going to say. You're going to say: 'Where does the West Country start? Where do you leave Middle England and enter the West Country?' Well, it's a problem. Coming from London you pass signs saying 'Slough' and 'The West', and you know very well when you are going to enter Slough but they never tell you when you get to the West. Nor, if you are going back to London, do you ever pass signs saying 'Slough and the East'. As a result, I have to generalise a bit, which means my subtitles might

end up looking a bit Marlboro'-handed."

Pardon?

"I'm glad you noticed that. It's an old word I'm trying to revive. Trouble is, most dialect words have died out by now, so I see it as my job to go through the archives and select the best for revival. One word I found in an old Wiltshire glossary was 'Marlboro'-handed', meaning 'cack-handed', on the grounds that the people of Marlborough were notoriously unhandy and clumsy. Well, that not only revives an old word, it also revives an old local prejudice, and the more of them the better."

Yes, but... "I know what you're going to say. You're going to say, if I think West Country dialect is so important, why don't I talk it? Why do I speak in this horrible Radio 4 voice? And the answer is, because you wouldn't understand I if I talked West Country."

Yes, but... Next in our series, *People With Very Unusual Jobs Indeed — A Man Who Records the Wounded And Dying Noises for Sega Games...*

Copy to 1320

Even before they lose, the Tory knives are out

The blaming has already begun. So far it is confined to a few bad headlines about differences between the Tory party chairman Brian Mawhinney and Lord Sanchi over the running of the Tory campaign. That is real enough. But it is trivial compared with what will happen, if the polls are even half right, in the early hours of Friday.

We can expect blame for a Tory defeat to be doled out on a much grander scale than a bit of tactical infighting in Central Office over who vetoed what advertisement in a campaign which, if it is lost, was probably lost six months ago or more.

The running, televised, inquest on why the Tories lost will take on, inevitably, the flavour of Labour post-1979. As in 1979, it will be mainly (though not exclusively) centred on the post-defeat leadership campaign. Part of being in politics, except for a handful of the most detached and far sighted of its practitioners, is parading the belief that your party would always be in power if it played its cards properly.



Donald Macintyre
A right-winger will still need to appeal across the spectrum. William Hague could fit the bill

him of the uncomfortable role of presiding over a shadow cabinet several of whose most prominent members are taking part in a leadership contest in which his own stewardship of the party will be an issue.

One quite widespread assumption in the party is nevertheless that Major will announce by the weekend that he is standing down, but will soldier on until June, allowing a leadership contest by the summer. Secondly, there will be kingmakers as well as candidates on the right, for example, whoever Peter Lilley supports will have great influence because, while he might just stand himself, he is widely seen on the right as the most desirable chancellor-in-waiting.

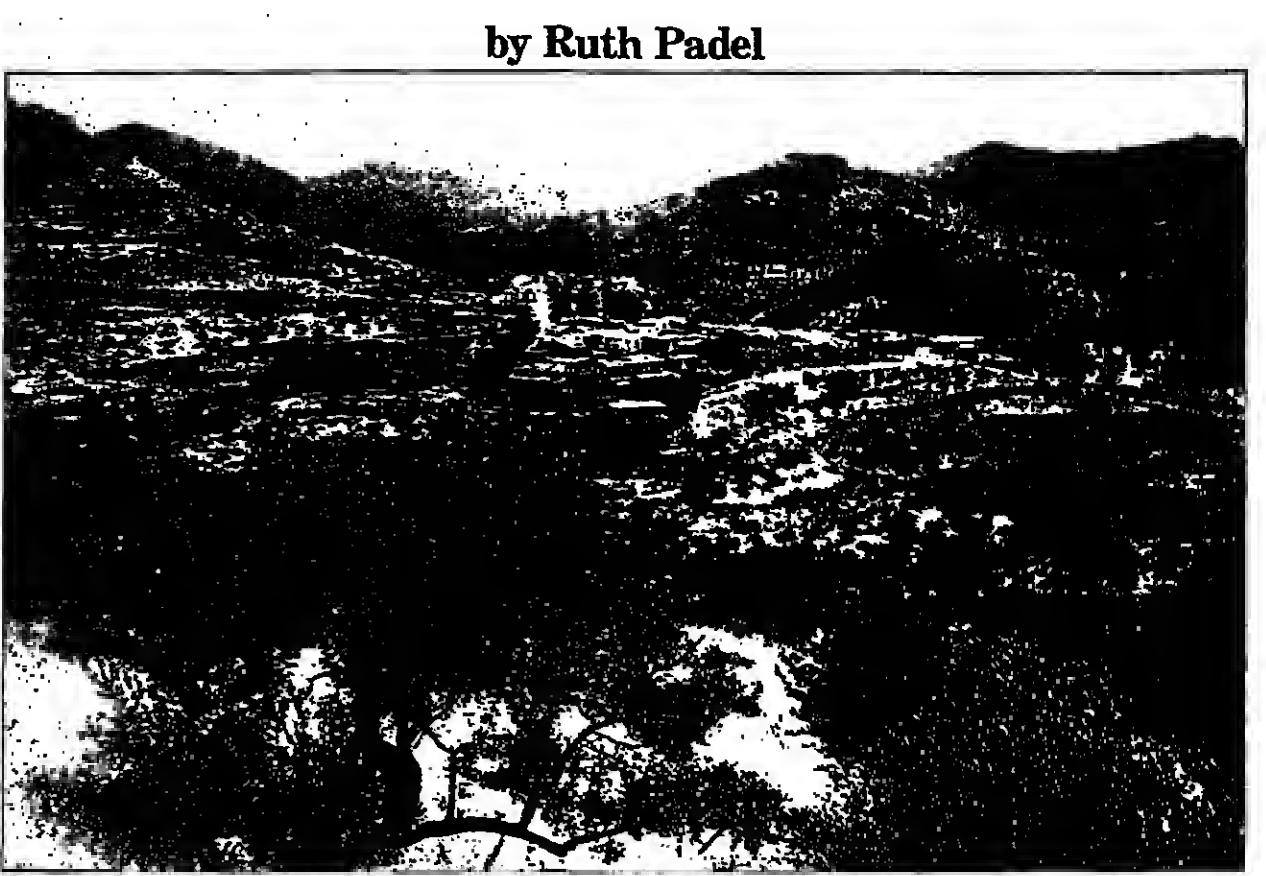
John Redwood, freed of cabinet responsibility, has been able to campaign semi-permanently. But has it helped? Michael Portillo, William Hague and Michael Howard can all argue that Redwood was disloyal in ways that they have not been. And all of them presently look to be more plausible candidates of the right than Redwood. Portillo probably has the edge in excitement and youth to pit against Tony Blair. He has been uncompromisingly a man of the right. I would not be amazed if a mainstream, even leftish, MP like Tim Yeo backed him. But he will need time to broaden his appeal.

Heaney's bog? Greeks don't have a word for it

by Ruth Padel

I meet Kazantzakis's god-daughter in Kolonaki, Athens' Kensington. Katerina Angelakaki-Rooke is a well-known poet I last saw at a round-table workshop when she, I and Glyn Maxwell discovered deep rifts between Greek and British poetry. Now there are raucous café greetings. My daughter (grown-up talk, boring, in Greek, double-boring) sinks disgusted into *Treasure Island*. Heartless mum, dragging Glyn Power through Athens with an improving book.

Katerina has just translated Heaney. Greeks often feel affinity with Ireland - something to do with rural life, religion and diaspora. "We know we're bringing up our children in this lovely place to leave it," said a Galway mother to me. Any Greek mum away from the city knows the same. Both countries became independent through unforgettable bloodshed, and the scars of civil war still throb. Feeding marginal and small, both secretly know they're at the centre of everything, and celebrate all this in songs that go back to masculine heroism and ancient gold.



'We know we're bringing up our children in this lovely place to leave it,' a lament of Greek and Irish mothers

Ireland and Greece have much in common - rural life, religion, diaspora. But poetry about wet places doesn't travel easily

live by translating - women translate, the men relate. Funny way round, isn't it?"

Do I sniff gender warfare? I ponder certain divisions (masculine metrics versus female openness) some people see in British poets. "When I started 40 years ago," says Katerina, "I was 16. Women's poetry wasn't anywhere. Now it's quite different. We have a lot of good women, maybe more than 50."

Mediterranean. It suits us. Gave us freedom. Connecting things in a rational way is useless in Greece. Life and poetry - nothing is connected. I disagree; but I'm only Mediterranean part-time.

Your godfather Kazantzakis: he wanted to connect things, didn't he? Did you learn much from him? "Last time I saw him I was seven. When I was two and a half I asked him, 'Do you love me?' He said 'yes'. I said, 'If you love me properly let's get under the bed together!' My mother took some years to tell me that."

Delphi and prose. Kay Cicellis is a diaspora Greek from Massachusetts. Her first languages were French and English. She used to run Athens' most cosmopolitan restaurant. Her first novels were written in English when she worked for the BBC. She remembers skiing in the Cairngorms ("Ruth - the pomfrit!") and wrote her first Greek piece during the 1967-74 junta, to show solidarity with the resistance.

Where to hear poets, since you're not living in Athens. Don Patterson and Roddy Lumsden, *Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh*; 30 April (0131 220 4349). Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes, *Clarendon Centre, Brighton*, 8 May (01273 709 709). Andrew Motion, *Old Operating Theatre, London*, SE1; 8 May (0171 955 4791). Sarah Maguire, *Voice Box, Royal Festival Hall*; 13 May (0171 960 4242). Greek poets: contact Hellenic Centre, 16 Paddington Street, London W1 (0171 857 5060).

Tatton's unique and cruel choice



Andreas Whittam Smith
If Mr Hamilton loses, he will be ruined. If Martin Bell wins, he will enjoy a most unusual kind of freedom

I standing for Parliament in Tatton against Neil Hamilton, the Tory MP fighting allegations of corruption, Martin Bell, the white knight in the white suit, former TV war reporter, has two tasks to accomplish. First he has to win. But if he does, he will then have to create from scratch the entire notion of being an independent Member. The species vanished from Westminster with the abolition of the Oxford and Cambridge university seats soon after the war.



Martin Bell canvassing in Wilmslow, Cheshire yesterday

as an independent candidate? Are the Labour and Liberal parties corrupt? And she added: "It does not bode well for the future of Britain that both these parties felt that their candidate could not stand up to Neil Hamilton." Her feelings are understandable. But it would probably need tactical voting on a massive and unprecedented scale to unseat the incumbent. There is also a bit of irritation at the way Mr Bell was, so to speak, parachuted into the constituency at the last moment. And there is resentment that national newspapers and television appear to be telling Tatton electors that this is what they should do and this is whom they should choose.

There, for every Labour or Liberal Democrat supporter who feels disenfranchised by the absence of their candidate, one can find many more, especially the young, who are keen to vote for some kind of fresh start at Westminster. On the streets of the constituency, as I walked with Mr Bell, a passing motorist wound down her window to wish him the best of luck. Non-Tory voters, rather than despairingly contemplating the sheer size of Mr Hamilton's majority, the fourth safest Conservative constituency in the country, at last feel their votes will count for something. For Mr Bell puts first the concept of trust and honour. "I am standing primarily on the issue of trust," he writes in his election address.

and much emotional distress ... you really cannot understand what it is like ... to wake up in the morning dreading to see the front pages or to turn on the radio ... to go to bed at night with fear gripping your stomach." So he finds himself fighting a general election with the least appropriate of weapons: solicitors' letters and legal threats.

Mr Hamilton may well lose on Thursday; the local opinion polls indicate as much. In which case the tragedy of his political career, the centre of his life since he was at university in Wales in the late Sixties, will have come close to its final stages. He was forced to resign as a minister in 1994; he will have thrown away a safe seat; he will not find it easy to re-establish his career as a tax barrister; he appears to have few financial reserves; he will still have to await the findings of Sir Gordon Downey on the question of whether he had been paid to ask questions in Parliament. If the finding is adverse, he will be comprehensively ruined. At 46, the career of the brilliant, ambitious, hard-working son of a modest family (both his grandfathers were coalminers in South Wales, and his father was a mining engineer) will have ended.

Why bother? She'll probably die anyway



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obituaries / gazette

Bunny Roger

Erstwhile courtiér, wit, dandy, landowner, and social ornament, Bunny Roger was what obituary in its oblique days styled a lifelong bachelor and what gossip columnists knew as a flamboyant homosexual.

Not that the phraseology of old Fleet Street would have distressed him: he was nothing if not implacably conservative and as the last of a kind he could scarcely expect new labels. Equally, the Queen's English (like anything else remotely royal) deserved veneration and there was one term he always resisted: "You can't call queer men 'gay'. Apart from anything else, they're all so miserable. The Greeks were more accurate when they called the Furies the 'Kindly Ones'."

Yet Bunny himself – so styled from infancy when his nanny imagined a likeness – was far from morose. As the second of Sir Alexander and Lady Roger's three sons he determined precociously to wrest parental attention from his better-placed siblings and all his life he retained a showman's resilience, an enthusiasm for energy and a conviction that life is what one makes it.

His father was a City tycoon, self-made, Aberdonian, a magnate in international telecommunications, while his mother, also Scotch, was an extravaganza whose portrait by William Acton later surveyed Roger's drawing-room. What they can have been thinking when they gave their six-year-old middle son a fairy's costume of filmy skirts and butterfly wings, with the promise of a wand to further his caperings, it is hard to imagine; but the Rogers were a happy family and by the early Thirties, the Depression notwithstanding, they were also a wealthy one, and lived in opulence at Ewhurst

Park in Hampshire as tenants of the Duke of Wellington.

Following a miserable schooling at Loretto outside Edinburgh, Roger read History at Balliol under F.F. Urquhart.

"The Sliggers" celebrated Alpine reading parties failed to entice, and Roger instead joined Ouds (thereby meeting his life-long friend Terence Rattigan) and danced the Charleston with any compliant Rugby Blue.

After a year, determined on a career designing clothes, he left Balliol for drawing classes at the Ruskin. Rouge and hair dye enlivened his prettiness and soon he passed as an unthreatening sweetheart among the virgins, girl-shy undergraduates. Osbert Lancaster presented him with a pukeine puppy; others pressed more unequivocal suits; but the authorities were watching and Roger was summoned before a domish tribunal, accused of corrupting homosexual activities and banished from Oxford.

America he found disappointing and disenchantment was compounded when in Hollywood he was likened to the young George Arliss and not the next Marlene Dietrich. He crossed Hitler's Germany in one of his father's Rolls-Royces to visit a cousin in Poland. He frequented London parties (although stories that he and his brothers attended a Chelsea Arts Club ball as the Bromé sisters were apocryphal). He befriended and patronised the young Edward Burra. As an assistant in the studio in Waring and Gillow he helped furnish King Zog's palaces; later, at Fortnum's tailoring, he learnt about costing and cutting.

Finally, with encouragement and advice from Edward Molyneux and Victor Stiebel and £1,000 backing from his father,

he opened his own dress-making establishment, Neil Roger, in Great Newport Street in 1937. The showroom was decorated in Regency Gothic and for his first collection Roger invited everyone mentioned in the current *Tatler* and disguised his boldness by scrawling across each invitation the fictitious assurance, "Mary asked me to send you this". He numbered among his clients the Lygon sisters, Vivien Leigh and Princess Marina.

During the Second World War, conspicuously routed in the Rifle Brigade, he saw active service in Italy and North Africa and after being demobbed he set up a new establishment in Bruton Mews before being invited to run the couture department at Fortnum's. Presently, with his friend Hardy Amies financially precarious, he invested a generous sum in the House of Amies and for a while operated from there. His investment was handsomely vindicated when Debenhams acquired his holding and he retired in 1973.

Besides, party-giving, which happily combined Roger's passions for dancing and dressing up, had long constituted a second vocation. With his younger brother Sandy he had moved in 1946 to Walton Street and their large house, with its basement murals depicting a Highland Garden of Eden, soon became a celebrated, if louche, nocturnal destination. Their 1952 *Quo Vadis?* party, with no address supplied on the invitation, saw Bunny Roger scantily clad for slowness. The year 1953 marked the Coronation Ball, with its host bejewelled as Queen Alexandra, and 1956 the notorious Fetish Party, which provoked full-page dismay in the *People*.

In their day these extravaganzas were outrageous; and even

at the Diamond, Amethyst and Flame Balls, given to celebrate his 60th, 70th and 80th birthdays, Roger outshone and out-danced his guests from the worlds of theatre and fashion.

He dispensed sedate hospitality at Durdonell, the estate in Wester Ross he shared with his brothers. A phenomenon of energy, even in his eighties, he interrupted his constant cooking, talking and card-playing to show guests the famous Chinese gardens created by his brother Alan or to don yet another astonishing suit. He was, after all, a Savile Row institution and his 150 suits catered, albeit theatrically, for every contingency.

He invented the tight-cut Capri trousers while on holiday on the island in 1949 and by the Fifties he was sponsoring a neo-Edwardian silhouette – four-button jackets with generous shoulders and mean waists, lapped waistcoats, high-cut trousers – for plain, checked and striped suits. Accessories, whether a high-crowned bowler or ruby cuff-links, were indispensable; and even in his eighties the final effect, with Roger's eight-stone frame and white, much-lifted face turned vain singularity to artistry.

All dandies need an audience but Bunny Roger inspired what almost amounted to a following, partly because by word and deed he never stopped entertaining; partly because we are all nostalgic for style. Most crucially, however, he was true: beneath his suave mannerisms he was stalwart, frank, dependable and unswerving; to onlookers a passing peacock, to intimates a life enhancer and exemplary friend.

Clive Fisher

Neil Munroe ("Bunny") Roger, couturier; born London 9 June 1911; died London 27 April 1997.



Outrageous: Roger at his Amethyst Ball, 1961. Photograph: Rex

Churton Fairman

When Radio 1 celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1992 one of the launch disc jockeys could not be found.

The once well-known voice of Mike Raven had been included among the Sixties' Sounds available on headphones at the Royal Academy's Pop Art exhibition but there were rumours that he was dead. Someone making a personal appearance as Mike Raven was exposed as a fraud. Eventually a Radio 1 appeal for his real whereabouts was heard by a butcher in Cornwall who revealed that Raven had become an artist living under the name Churton Fairman on Bodmin Moor.

This was his real name. He was the son of the actress Hilary Moore, Gerald Du Maurier's tall leading lady, who died in America when Fairman was a child. He claimed that his father sold him for £500 to his three maiden aunts, who sent him to Aldenham School. Later he ran away from Magdalen College, Oxford, to join the Ballet Rambert and became Angela Rambert's partner.

After war service with the Royal Ulster Rifles he turned to photography, specialising in ballet shots. In 1949 he married Aurelia, a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, and took her back to her home. This inspired him to write a book, *Art and Spain* (1952), about Spain's undiscovered countryside. Later in London he moonlighted from a theatrical job by playing flamenco guitar music in a Spanish restaurant.

A meeting with the director Peter Brook whilst in Spain to experience Seville's Holy Week led to Fairman's becoming a stage manager and actor. He appeared in Moscow with John Gielgud and for almost a decade he was a production manager for early ITV drama programmes. When ITV's *Stars on Sunday* religious series suddenly ended Fairman presented both the acclaimed *Ten Commandments* programme and its successor *Songs That Matter*. He also contributed to ATV's weekday *Epilogue* slots.

In 1964 he called himself "Mike Raven" for pirate radio broadcasts on Atlanta, Radio King and 390. He achieved nationwide fame in 1967 as one of the first disc jockeys to broadcast on Radio 1's launch day and his 30-minute Sunday night *The Mike Raven Blues Show* soon became a two-hour slot.

As Mike Raven he went on to appear in several horror films including *Crucible of Terror* (1971) and *Discipline of Death* (1972).

It was Fairman's own decision to leave radio in 1971 and two years later he and his second wife, Mandy, moved to Cornwall, where they converted a 17th-century pigsty into a cottage. In 1974, at the age of 50, he began to produce carvings in wood and stone. In 1980, without any farming experience, he and his large family moved to a remote and run-down farm near Bislund on Bodmin Moor, where the sculpting continued.



Fairman: 'A Crucifix for Today?' Photograph: BBC

Looking back after 10 years at the farm he saw his whole life as having been conditioned by what he believed to be his unsuccessful struggle to come to terms with his sexuality and consequently equally unsuccessful attempts to live up to his Christian beliefs. Having abandoned his celebrity name he had a long and frustrating search for recognition in his new life. Before putting his interpretations of Old and New Testament passages into sculptural form there were the horses, sheep and cows to look after.

Two incidents drove him on. First he suffered a heart condition and was ordered to stop his farm work. This he took as a signal from God to get on with the art. Second, a former art school principal who saw his work told him to do nothing but carve for the rest of his life.

He determined not to sell a single piece until he had enough for an exhibition but there followed a series of misadventures. The distinguished art critic Peter Fuller had his interest aroused but before he could put pen to paper he was killed in the car accident which shook the art world. Then the artist Lady Christina Hoare discovered his work whilst promoting her proposed Christian Arts Centre. Praising him for his honesty and freedom from other artists' influence, she wrote: "A soul being led by the Holy Spirit, surely." Hoare invited him to exhibit with her in London but she too died unexpectedly.

Fairman's first show was eventually arranged in Cornwall but within hours of the advertised opening the sponsors pulled out on the grounds that some of the religious works were in bad taste.

Those controversial pieces in local wood and Cornish granite were at last displayed in London, in the crypt of St George's Church, Bloomsbury (1981 and 1992), where the priest-in-charge was churlish to the visual arts. Fairman was delighted to discover that the many visitors scrutinising his work included Brian Sewell.

In the capital there was less objection to Fairman's unorthodox interpretations, such as *Peniel*, where Jacob's maleness is highlighted as he wrestles with the angel. Fairman anyway believed that today the sexes were as close as they had ever been and was concerned about the place of women in the Church being recognised. In *Mater Dolorosa* Mary shares Christ's agony with the nails passing through both their hands. *A Crucifix for Today?* has a man and a woman back to back on a natural cross (formed by a tree).

The *Deposition from the Cross*, which attempts to solve the physical problems faced by Joseph of Arimathea in detaching and lowering the dead body from a standing cross, was shown alongside work by Henry Moore in the 1993 "Images of Christ" exhibition, a survey of 20th-century religious iconography, at Northampton and St Paul's Cathedral, London.

Recently Fairman saw his sculpture go on permanent display at the Penzance Gallery in Penzance. He was reconciled with the Roman Catholic Church and had even dug his own grave on the moor.

Leigh Hatts

Austin Churton Fairman (Mike Raven), actor, broadcaster and artist; born London 15 November 1924; married 1949 Aurelia Pascual y Perez (one son, three daughters; marriage dissolved 1965); 1964 Mandy Kilbey (two sons); died Bodmin Moor 24 April 1997.

Dr Robert Simpson

Robert Simpson was a true son of Ballymena, the Co Antrim town where he spent his life as a general practitioner and which he represented for 20 years in the Stormont Parliament. He spoke with the Scots accent typical of the area and exemplified the qualities of that hardy race: openness, honesty, a bluntness of speech relieved and lightened by a lovely self-deprecating humour.

As the eldest son of a small farmer he would have inherited 50 fertile acres but had no inclination for the back-breaking slog, though he was deeply immersed in the ways of the countryside.

He was educated at the local academy and at Queen's University, Belfast, where he qualified in 1946, setting up his plate in his home town and known to all and sundry as Doctor Bob. When he entered politics in 1952, a Unionist nomination – and with his Protestant background there was no agonising over which party he would choose – meant a guaranteed seat. In fact for all the elections



Simpson: non-partisan

until 1969 he was returned unopposed. Yet his open ecumenism was there from the outset and he was a staunch upholder of liberal Unionist politics.

When he was appointed Minister of Community Relations under the premier James Chichester-Clark he resigned from both the Orange and Masonic Orders, in order that he might be seen to be non-partisan, and set about promoting contacts and making friends across the two communities.

To that end, with the help of Maurice Hayes, then director of the Community Relations Commission, he instigated a series of dinner parties attended by well-known figures in the arts and academic circles, among them the young Seamus Heaney, like himself born on a small farm not 30 miles from Ballymena. Hayes relates how these convivial gatherings eventually collapsed under the weight of vintage hospitality generously provided by Paddy Fallon, a well-known hotel proprietor. But the friendship with Heaney survived and when the poet became a Nobel laureate last year Simpson, no mean hand with the pen himself, was moved to celebrate the occasion in verse:

What's more our fathers unacquainted
Buying and selling sleek milch cows
On the same Fall Hill, bartered,
teased and coaxed
Clinging deals with a handspan,
reveling with hot dinners at McIwhee
Those two men, unacquainted, well
their separate ways
One a Planter, one a Gael.

Before his inclusion in gov-

ernment Simpson had been a firm supporter of Terence O'Neill's reformist policies and opposed to the hardline Unionist faction whose fuleman was Brian Faulkner.

This allegiance effectively ended Bob Simpson's career in politics, because two years later, when Faulkner took over the premiership from Chichester-Clark, he was unceremoniously sacked from the Cabinet along with another leading O'Neill supporter, Phelema O'Neill, then Minister of Agriculture.

The split with Faulkner was far from harmonious and, a year later, Simpson resigned both his seat and an active role in political life, a decision he never regretted.

For he had several other intensely rewarding strings to his bow. Until his death he was a regular and prolific contributor to all manner of journals and periodicals, writing on medicine and agriculture but especially on the self-financing travel which took him across the world, to the Antipodes, South Africa, Russia and the palaces of Rajasthan. The canny Ballymena thriftiness is never too far away,

which made him an obvious candidate for Community Relations under O'Neill's successor and standard-bearer, Chichester-Clark.

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In enthusing over the cathedral at Reims he remembers to mention the nearby Logis de France where you pay for the room, not the number of occupants, a considerable saving! A weekly medical column widely syndicated went under the pseudonym Dr John Barfoot.

His other lively interests were his two-acre garden in Ballymena where he specialised in trees, of which he had over 250 species, and music. He was one of the moving spirits in the annual Ballymena Music Festival, a competition along the lines of the traditional Ulster feis. As fund-raiser and administrator he saw the festival as an instrument of harmonious co-operation between the two communities, a leitmotiv of his life's endeavour.

Roy Bradford

Robert Simpson, medical practitioner and politician; born 3 July 1923; MP (Unionist) Mid-Antrim, Parliament of Northern Ireland 1953-72; PC (Northern Ireland) 1970; married 1954 Dorothy Strawbridge (two sons, one daughter); died 8 April 1997.

Allan Francovich

It was not I, but Tiny Rowland, who persuaded Allan Francovich to make his film about Lockerbie, writes Dr Jim Swire (further to the obituary by Tim Dalyell, 28 April).

I first met Allan for lunch in a London Italian restaurant, where his facility with languages and vivacious enjoyment of the occasion revealed him as high-

ly intelligent and widely read. It soon became apparent that he really cared about the human consequences of the disaster even more deeply than he resented what he had seen as, at the very least, a readily avoidable massacre of so many innocents.

He had already assembled a team, backed by the financial muscle, determination and

world-wide contacts of Tiny Rowland of Loughor, to make a film, and he needed to hear (and was profoundly moved by) the plight of the relatives. Thus began a friendship which we greatly valued.

Allan had worked for the Observer film unit and became known to Tiny, who selected him as his man to investigate

Lockerbie, giving him complete editorial control over *The Maltese Double Cross*.

During the making of the film it became clear that there were people in powerful positions who were determined to stop it; the lives of Allan and other team members were threatened. Tiny Rowland, his executive Ken Etheridge and

contributors to the film suffered grievously. This extraordinary exhibition by "authority," starting with accusations of being "Libyan dupes," and continuing with overt threats even of imprisonment, lent credibility to growing suspicions that something desperate was being concealed and that "the team" must be getting warm.

When the truth about Lockerbie is made clear, it may turn out that Allan Francovich's last film and his dogged following of its ramifications were his greatest contribution to the cause of truth in analysing the way that the intelligence services of the world's most powerful nations relate both to other nations and to its own citizens.



Fairman: 'A Crucifix for Today?' Photograph: BBC

BIRTHS

COOKE: On 25 April 1997, to Libby (nee Reid) and Gordon, a son, Timothy Kenneth Reid, a brother for John.

WHITTING: On 30 April 1997, to Emma (nee Fallon) and John, a son, Thomas John.

MARRIAGES

WILKINSON/MENHENVEN: On 12 April, in glorious sunshine, Caroline, daughter of Robert and the late Vera Wilkinson, of Pangbourne and Weymouth, and Mark, eldest son of David and Audrey Menhenvet, of Beckenham, Thames, to be God.

DEATHS

BOYD: William George, Esq. ARCS BSc, peacefully on 26 April 1997 at Wandsworth House, Oxfordshire, aged 57 years. Formerly secretary of SLUB Examinations (1950-1951). Beloved father of Elizabeth, Andrew, Georgia, Victoria, Caroline and Julian and loving grandfather of Luke, Kate, Sam and Toby. Funeral service at Wandsworth Parish Church, near Bathurst, Friday 9 May at 11am. Donations to the Society of Friends, 11, Bathurst, Oxfordshire, OX2 9JH.

HORNBY: After a short illness, at Monklands Hospital, on 25 April 1997, Terry, father of Malcolm, Elaine and Carol. Funeral service at Dalwood Crematorium, Broomhouse, on 28 April 1997 at 11am.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS: The Prince of Wales attends a reception at St James's Palace for the Royal Book Society's 25th Anniversary, and as President, the Prince's Trust, attends Jesus Christ Superstar at the Lyceum Theatre, London W1. The Princess Royal, President, British Academy of Film and Television Arts, attends Bala's 50th Anniversary Awards, Royal Albert Hall, London SW7. Princess Alexandra visits the

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Friday 2 May, at 12 noon. Family flowers only, please.

LEMMARE: Iris, the conductor, died at her home at Ashdam Bryan, York on Wednesday, 26 April 1997. The funeral will be at York Crematorium on Thursday 1 May at 3pm. A collection will be held for the RSPB. All enquiries please to the North Yorkshire Co-operative Funeral Service, Cromwell Road, York YO1 1DU. Telephone 01904 643936.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, etc.) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171-293 0111 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements include notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

United States to open the new headquarters of Land Rover North America in Lansing, Michigan and to attend the 30th anniversary celebrations of Amman, Maryland. Changing of the Guard: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, April 26. 7 Company Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Scots Guards.

Birthdays

Mr Frank Auerbach, painter, 66; Mr Joseph Barrington, squash player, 56; Miss Ann Bell, actress, 57; Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, 55; Mr Tom Clarke, Editor, *Sporting Life*, 58; Mr Daniel Day-Lewis, actor, 40; Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fay, chairman, Independent Committee for Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services, 54; Mrs Ruth Deech, Principal, St Anne's College, Oxford, 49; Sir Peter de la Billière, 63; Miss Anita Dobson, actress, 48; Mr Lorne Donegan, musician, 66; Mr Israel Feinstein QC, former president, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 76; Dame Rennie Fritchie, former chairman, South and West Regional Health Authority, 55; Mr Deryck Gwyler, actor and comedian, 83; Sir Patrick Hamill, former Chief Constable, Strathclyde, 67; Miss Celeste Holm, actress, 78; Mr Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, 60; Mile Zid Jeanmaire, dancer, 73; Professor David Jones, Vice-Chancellor, Bradford University, 66; Miss Cheryl Kennedy, actress, 50; Sir Anthony Laughton, cinematographer, 70; Mr Rod McKuen, composer and poet, 64; Mr John Morris, conductor, 61; Mr John Miller, golfer, 50; Sir Fraser Noble, former Vice-Chancellor, Aberdeen University, 79; General Sir Patrick Palmer, Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle, 64; Lord Rothschild, financier, 61; Mr Harold Shapiro, composer, 77; Mr Jeremy Thorpe, former MP, 68; Mr David Tindle, painter, 65; Mr Alfred Valentine, former cricketer, 67; Mr Richard Warwick, actor, 52; Mr Nigel Williams, ambassador to the United Nations, 60; Professor Heinz Wolff, bio-engineer, 69; Sir Peter

Youths, former colonial administrator, 81.

Anniversaries

Births: Alexander II, Tsar of Russia, 1818; William Randolph Hearst, newspaper proprietor, 1863; Sir Thomas Beedham, conductor, 1879; Sir Malcolm Sargent, conductor, 1895; Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, jazz composer and bandleader, 1899. Deaths: Wallace Carothers, chemist and developer of nylon, 1937; Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock, film director, 1980. On this day: the Corn Law Bill received Royal Assent, 1842; in Ethiopia a severe earthquake caused the death of 24 people, injuring 168, 1969. Today is the Feast Day of St Catherine of Siena, St Hugh of Cluny, St Joseph Cottolengo, St Robert of Molesmes and St Wilfrid the Younger.

Lectures

National Gallery: Norman Coady, "Drawings (v): Guercino and Italian Baroque Drawing", 1pm. British Museum: Paul Collins, "The Nabataean City of Petra", 1.15pm. National Portrait Gallery: Phyllis Gordick-Park, "Felix Topolski and His Portrait", 1.15pm. RIBA Architecture Centre, London W1: John Tuomey, "O'Donnell and Tuomey", 6.30pm.

Appointments

Mr Robin Christopher, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia. Mr Tony Abbott, to be Governor of Montserrat. Mr Justice Tuckey, to be Judge in Charge of the Commercial List.

'Independent' was not in contempt of court

LAW REPORT

29 April 1997

Attorney General v Newspaper Publishing plc, Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (Lord Bingham, Lord Chief Justice, Mr Justice Laitham and Mr Justice Poole) 25 April 1997

Conduct by a third party which was inconsistent with a court order in only a trivial or technical way did not amount to a contempt of court.

The Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) dismissed an application by the Attorney General for penalties for contempt of court to be imposed on Newspaper Publishing plc, Ian Hargreaves and Christopher Blackhurst.

The application was made as a result of the publication in the *Independent* on 8 November 1995 of facsimiles of parts of two documents referred to in the judgment of Lord Taylor CJ, delivered on 7 November 1995, in the appeals of William Blackledge, John Grician, Bryan Mason and Colin Phillips against their convictions of offences in connection with the contravention of certain Export of Goods (Control) Orders by Ordnance Technologies Ltd ("the Ordnance appeal").

Mr Hargreaves and Mr Blackhurst were at the relevant time respectively editor of, and

a journalist employed by, the *Independent*.

Philip Havers QC and Ian Burnet (Treasury Solicitor) for the Attorney General; Charles Gray QC and Justin Rushbrooke (King's College) for the respondents.

On 6 November 1995 Mr Blackhurst had obtained, from a source believed to be unconnected with the Ordnance appellants and their advisers, a set of papers relating to the case, some of which were subject to redactions or in summarised form. The report in the following day's newspaper included facsimiles of parts of two of the documents quoted from in the judgment, and they were what founded the present application.

The Attorney General accepted that the order made on 17 July 1995 had not been made against the world at large or the media, and that the respondents were not, therefore, bound by it. He submitted, relying on *Attorney General v Newspaper Publishing plc* [1988] Ch 333, that if a third party, with the requisite knowledge and intent, so acted as to frustrate or undermine or set at naught the basis upon which a court had determined that justice should be administered, he was guilty of contempt because

he thereby interfered with the due administration of justice.

The respondents accepted that in the light of that authority a person might be liable for contempt even though not directly bound by an order of the court. They submitted, correctly, that it was not any conduct inconsistent with a court order which would render a third party guilty of contempt.

Where it was sought to impose indirect liability on a third party, the justification for so doing lay in that party's interference with the administration of justice. It was not necessary to show that the administration of justice in the relevant proceedings had been wholly frustrated or rendered utterly futile, but there must have been some significant and adverse effect thereon.

The branches committed by the respondents were in truth very minor. Reproduction of the form of the documents did not amount to a significant interference with the administration of justice.

Although the application was a proper one for the Attorney General in his public duty, it must be dismissed.

Kate O'Hanlon, BARRISTER

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**EXECUTIVE
EXTRAVAGANZA**
is here!
see page 18
*
Holiday Inn

**FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR**

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

G7 warning fails to dampen the rising dollar

**Diane Coyle
Economics Editor**

The dollar forged ahead yesterday despite a weekend signal from the Group of Seven industrial countries that the rise in the US currency has gone far enough.

Currency traders took the bland wording of the G7 communiqué to mean there was little danger yet of central bank intervention to halt the dollar's ascent.

"The G7 meeting has left the foreign exchange market in the

mood to test official resolve to maintain stable exchange rates," said Stephen Lewis, chief economist at London Bood Broking.

The dollar reached its highest level against the yen for more than three years, and its highest against the German mark for four and a half years yesterday morning, before dropping back a little. It ended in London at DM1.7285 and ¥126.55, both up on Friday's close.

Analysts said there was little chance of a reversal in the currency's upward trend as long as

the US economy continued to expand so much more robustly than Germany and Japan. Figures later this week for America's national output in the first quarter and for job creation this month are likely to confirm the markets in their expectation of a further rise in US interest rates next month.

Yesterday brought figures showing stronger than expected sales of new homes in March despite a drop from the previous month's high level, leaving the stock of unsold homes at its lowest in the US since April

1994. This is expected to boost housebuilding for the remainder of the year.

Gerard Lyons, chief economist at DKB, said: "It will require a change in economic fundamentals for the dollar to lose its attraction. The market will probably tread carefully, but it is hard to see any prospect of concerted intervention."

The fact that there are good economic reasons for the dollar's strength, probably explains why the G7 ministers and central bankers did not go further in their attempt to talk it down.

The statement went only a little further than earlier signals that exchange rates have moved far enough. It added only a comment on "the importance of avoiding exchange rates that could lead to the re-emergence of large external imbalances," a reference to concerns about the growing US trade deficit with Japan.

"We're not at the stage yet where we can see the G7 as desperately worried about trade imbalances," said Stephen Hamann, director of research at IBJ International.

The central bankers meeting in Washington continued to try to talk the US currency down yesterday. Hans Tietmeyer, Bundesbank President, said: "The US is interested in having a stronger dollar but not a stronger one. We are very much interested in having a strong DM, but not a weaker one." Nobody wanted the dollar to overheat, he added.

The G7 communiqué stressed the need for Japan to continue to deregulate its economy in order to boost growth. It said progress towards the sin-

gle currency in Europe, and its implications for financial markets, would be monitored.

Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, said after the G7 meeting that there had been "no pressure" for the central banks to intervene directly in the markets by selling dollars.

Figures today for employment costs in the US are expected to show a pick-up in inflationary pressures, while tomorrow's preliminary estimate of GDP in the first quarter is likely to show the annual pace of growth climbing to 4 per cent or more.

Mulcahy joins the elite who earn £1m a year

Terry Macalister

Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive of retail conglomerate Kingfisher, has joined the elite list of Britain's industrialists earning in excess of £1m a year.

The boss of the Comet electrical wholesaler and B&Q do-it-yourself chain saw his overall remuneration rise to £1.26m, a 26 per cent increase last year compared with 1995.

This figure puts Sir Geoffrey on a par with Sir Richard Sykes, deputy chairman and chief executive of the Glaxo Wellcome pharmaceuticals group, and Peter George, chief executive of the Ladbroke hotels and betting shops company. Last year, Sir Richard earned a total remuneration package of £1.127m; Mr George received £1.26m.

Sir Geoffrey's total package was boosted by a bonus of £325,000, relating to Kingfisher's financial performance. The group saw pre-exceptional profits rise 36 per cent to £390m last year, ahead of City forecasts.

The second best-paid executive at Kingfisher was Jim Hodgkinson, chairman of the group's DIY division.

He earned a basic salary of £305,000, which, with bonuses, climbed to an annual total of £588,000—a 68 per cent rise on the £350,000 he made in the previous 12 months.

Back in 1994 Sir Geoffrey did even better than 1996. He earned £1.4m in total but this time round his benefits, besides the usual company car and medical insurance, included personal tax advice.

The Kingfisher group refused to discuss the pay issue yesterday. A company spokeswoman said: "We do not make any comment on salaries which are all agreed by the company's remuneration committee."

And new figures from research group Pirc suggest Sir Geoffrey's remuneration package is generally on a par with the size of company he represents. While his basic salary of £640,000 is ranked 14th-largest in Britain, Kingfisher itself is ranked by capitalisation as the 49th-biggest in the UK.

Pirc admits that the size of a company is only one of several elements to be taken into account when comparing salaries. But it believes that there should usually be a close link between the two.

Yet its research shows that there is often a wide disparity in Britain. It says the highest paid executive at EMI gets £1.9m and yet the company has a market capitalisation of £5.2bn, ranking it 41st by size.

By contrast, another of Britain's largest groups, British Petroleum, pays its top executive a relatively meagre £370,000 a year, ranking him at number 72 in the top personal pay table, says Pirc.

Similarly, the top executive of Shell, the oil company in the top four by market capitalisation at £35.6bn, is paid £510,776. This is ranked 28th in the PIRC pay scales.

Hambro stuns City with Co-op apology

John Willcock

Sir Chips Keswick, chairman of Hambros Bank, issued an unprecedented public apology to the Co-operative Wholesale Society yesterday and paid a "substantial" cash settlement for his bank's part in Andrew Regan's aborted £1.2bn bid for the group.

The CWS accepted the apology and dropped all legal action against the bank over the seven boxes of confidential CWS files used by Hambros during the bid attempt.

Travers Smith Braithwaite, the City law firm hired by Mr Regan for the bid, also made a similar apology and a "substantial" settlement with the CWS yesterday.

Sir Chips wrote personally to Graham Melmoth, chief executive of the CWS, saying: "Regrettably, I have to say that it is quite clear to me the judgement exercised in Hambros proceeding in the way that it did fell well below our standards and those which you were entitled to expect from us."



Unprecedented apology: Sir Chips Keswick (left) and the letter he sent to the CWS chief

giving like this in public to an adversary. It will take years for Hambros' reputation to recover from this. The trouble is this story has become so public—it's even got into the non-financial press."

CWS had originally said it would sue Hambros and Travers Smith Braithwaite because they had "acted in breach of an equitable obligation of confidentiality to CWS."

CWS said the two firms could have no credible grounds for believing that Mr Regan and his partners and advisers had legitimately obtained documents about the CWS.

The bid collapsed on Friday after a High Court judge said the case represented a "gross, wilful and disgraceful breach of confidence."

The judge added that Mr Regan and his advisers had acted in an "iniquitous manner."

Hambros and Travers Smith Braithwaite resigned from advising both Galileo, the bid vehicle, and Mr Regan's Lanica Trust company yesterday, while the Lowe Bell Financial public relations firm said it was "winding down" its work for the Regan camp.

Hambros yesterday commissioned solicitors Norton Rose to carry out an inquiry into the bank's handling of the affair. The bank said it did this after consulting with its regulators, the Bank of England and the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA). The Bank would not comment, but a spokesman for the SFA said: "We are aware of

the independent inquiry by Norton Rose." No regulatory inquiries would be made until Norton Rose had completed its work.

A Hambros spokesman, asked whether the individuals in the bank who acted for Mr Regan—in particular Peter Large, one of its corporate financiers—were continuing to work as normal pending the outcome of the inquiry, said: "To my knowledge, yes."

The settlement payments from Hambros and Travers Smith Braithwaite are understood to be more than enough to cover CWS's legal costs in fighting the Regan bid. Last week the CWS Board indicated that damages could run into many millions of pounds.

As the fall-out from the aborted bid continued yesterday, Ronald Zimet, a key figure in the bid saga, resigned as chairman of Freepages Group because, a company spokesman said, Mr Zimet was worried that his involvement in the CWS affair was damaging Freepages' share price. "He decided to fall on his sword," said the spokesman. The share price had fallen from 45p at the end of last week to 37p at noon yesterday but recovered to 40p following the announcement.

In January 1995 Mr Regan made a £2.4m payment to Mr Zimet's Cayman Islands-based company, Tellis International, in return for negotiating an extension of a supply contract between Hobson, Mr Regan's former company, and the CWS.

Cable & Wireless Communications valued at £4.5bn after trading debut



Shares in Cable & Wireless Communications closed at 299.5p last night after their debut on the stock market, valuing the telephone and cable television company at £4.5bn. The launch of trading in London and New York was watched by Graham Wallace (right), chief executive of CWC, and his finance director, Nicholas Mearns-Smith, on the trading floor of Merrill Lynch in the City. The opening price of 300p a share was in line with analysts' forecasts. The shares rose 5p in early trading before settling back just below their opening price. CWC is a merger of telecoms company Mercury Communications and cable operators Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron. It is the largest provider of integrated telecoms and television entertainment services in Britain with 1.2 million telephone customers and 580,000 cable TV subscribers. Photograph: Jason Bye

Leeds Utd chief takes early bath

Michael Harrison

Robin Launders was yesterday forced out as chief executive of Leeds United less than a year after joining the club following its debut on the stock market. He will receive a pay-off of £150,000.

The decision was taken at a board meeting over the weekend and broken to Mr Launders by Chris Akers, chairman of Leeds' parent company, Caspian, at a one-hour meeting at Elland Road yesterday morning.

The meeting was also attended by Peter McCormick, a Leeds-based solicitor who sits on the club's board.

Mr Launders, who joined Leeds last August from Manchester United, where he had

been finance director, is said to have been shocked by the decision.

"It came like a bolt out of the blue. He was clearly upset," said one source.

Although the brief statement issued to the Stock Exchange said that Mr Launders had resigned, he was left with no option but to go.

"His management style was abrasive and confrontational and he was not able to work with the existing management," one director of the club said.

"Things were not getting done. It reached the point where the board felt it could not last one day longer."

Mr Launders was a highly respected financial director of Manchester United and is credited with being one of the driving forces behind its commercial success and the redevelopment and expansion of the Old Trafford ground.

However, his skills failed to gel at Elland Road where Mr Launders was charged with the task of both developing a strategy for the club as a whole and taking forward the £30m Arena project—Mr Akers' vision of turning Elland Road into the Madison Square Gardens of the UK as a property, leisure and multi-sports complex.

Mr Akers said: "It just did not work out. It was down to personality and management style and perhaps also we overlooked him with responsibilities."

He is being replaced by Jeremy Fenn, finance director of



Departure: Robin Launders is leaving Leeds after a year. Caspian, who will take up the job of Leeds United's managing director.

BSM shares crash after profit warning

Michael Harrison

Shares in the driving school business BSM crashed by more than a quarter yesterday after the company warned that new rules for learners taking their test will cut profits by a half for the first six months of the year.

The company also announced plans to cut its costs by £1m a year through the closure of more than 10 per cent of its branches. The shares fell by a third at one

stage but recovered slightly to end the day 37.5p lower at 103.5p—a reverse of 26 per cent.

Since the beginning of this year learner drivers have been required to pass a written test before being allowed to book their practical driving test. As a result, driving test applications received by the Driving Standards Agency have fallen by 54 per cent in the first three months of the year. The company said that it was also hit by

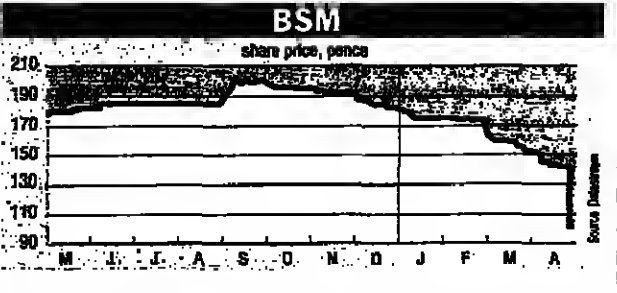
bad weather in January, which affected the number of people taking lessons.

Provisional driving licence applications, the accepted indicator of market trends, are down some 15 per cent on the first quarter of 1996, but only 5 per cent down on the first quarter of 1995.

"Nevertheless, many learners have postponed starting their practical driving lessons until they pass their theory test. Re-

flecting these market conditions, the number of BSM franchised driving instructors has declined by 110 to 2,018 since the start of the year, while the number of driving lessons and driving tests are also down," BSM said.

In the first half of 1996, BSM posted a pre-tax profit of £2.92m and paid a dividend of £2.53p. Although it now expects profits for the current half year to be about 50 per cent of



Commissioner says EMU on course

Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the European Commission responsible for the single currency project, assured an audience in Washington yesterday that EMU remained on course.

His remarks followed comments by IMF officials at the weekend warning that any delay to the single currency would risk causing turmoil on the foreign exchanges.

Mr de Silguy said he had no fear that France and Germany would miss the economic targets set out in the Maastricht Treaty. He added that it would be "out of the question" to weaken the criteria.

New economic forecasts from the Commission last week predicted that these two countries, along with others, would just scrape under the 3 per cent of GDP ceiling for their government budget deficit.

The same EU forecasts showed Italy missing the budget criterion. Separate predictions by the IMF last week showed France and Germany joining Italy outside the 3 per cent limit.

But Mr de Silguy said yesterday that the Commission's predictions would not necessarily exclude Italy from joining the single currency. The decision, to be made early next year,

would look at the structural reforms that had been carried out, only loss in each country, he said.

He stressed that the EMU heads of state will make the decision about which countries can join the first phase based on "real figures for 1997 and the budget proposals for 1998."

Lamberto Dini, Italy's foreign minister, also speaking in Washington, said that the country's hopes of participating in the first phase of EMU depended on a series of reforms in the pension system. He said: "Italy has a window if at most four months to take the difficult decisions."

Carlo Ciampi, the Treasury Minister, insisted that Italy would be within the 3 per cent ceiling for the key year for growth in 1997, the first year of the first wave. "I am confident that the Italian government has passed the 1997 budget package, including a one-off 'Eurotax' that Mr Ciampi said would be sufficient for the deficit target to be met."

IMF officials warned at the weekend that a delay to the single currency project would lead to "substantial dangers". Massimo Russo, a special adviser to EMU in the Fund, said it would not matter if some countries' budget deficits just above the per cent ceiling.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change %	28/4/97 High	28/4/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Chg	YTD %
FTSE 100	4369.70	+59.2	+1.4	4444.30	4056.60	3.70			
FTSE 250	4600.30	-17.2	-0.4	4729.40	4499.40	3.66			
FTSE 350	2143.00	+21.5	+1.0	2194.30	2017.90	3.67			
FTSE SmallCap	2298.67	+2.6	+0.1	2374.20	2178.29	3.04			
FTSE All-Share	2112.16	+19.7	+0.9	2163.94	1989.79	3.62			
New York	6728.87	+95.3	+0.5	7085.16	5032.94	1.82			
Hong Kong	18612.86	+260.7	+1.4	19445.00	17303.05	0.851			
Shanghai	12945.76	+104.8	+0.8	13866.24	12055.17	3.291			
Pan Pacific	3377.27	+32.9	+1.0	3480.59	2848.77	1.581			

Statistics as of 28 April

INTEREST RATES									
UK Interest rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	5.19	7.0	7.67	7.99	7.78	8.10			
US	5.56	6.21	6.94	6.59	7.14	8.84			
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.27	2.41					
Germany	3.13	3.28	5.32	6.37	6.68				

Bond Yields									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	5.19	7.0	7.67	7.99	7.78	8.10			
US	5.56	6.21	6.94	6.59	7.14	8.84			
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.27	2.41					
Germany	3.13	3.28	5.32	6.37	6.68				

MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	5.19	7.0	7.67	7.99	7.78	8.10			
US	5.56	6.21	6.94	6.59	7.14	8.84			
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.27	2.41					
Germany	3.13	3.28	5.32	6.37	6.68				

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Tr. High	Tr. Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Chg	YTD %	YTD %
\$ (London)	1.6319	+0.036	1.6114						
\$ (New York)	1.6245	-0.086	1.5980						
DM (London)	2.7997	-0.180	2.3118						
DM (New York)	2.7903	-0.180	2.3118						
¥ (London)	205.503	+0.532	180.982						
¥ (New York)	205.503	+0.532	180.982						
₹ (London)	99.8	+0.1	84.3						
₹ (New York)	99.8	+0.1	84.3						

OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Tr. High	Tr. Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Chg	YTD %	YTD %
Oil Brent \$	18.15	+0.3	19.84						
Gold \$	342.45	+0.75	384.35						
Gold £	210.98	+1.53	260.92						
Base Rates									
UK	5.19								
US	5.56								
Japan	0.53								
Germany	3.13								

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMONDWould-be high-flyer
EIS remains
firmly earthbound

The engineering group EIS makes much of the fact that profits never declined during the recession and indeed that it has now raised its results for 26 consecutive years. The problem is that much of that growth appears to have been achieved through unimpressive acquisitions, financed by dilutive share issues. Earnings per share, which only recently surpassed the 1990 peak of 28.2p, have gone nowhere.

Yesterday, the group compounded its dull record with a warning that it had been hit by the combined impact of depressed European markets and a strong pound. The news sent the shares crashing 32p to 312.5p, a level not seen for more than five years.

The 1996 figures accompanying the announcement suggested a year in line with recent form. Pre-tax profits rose 15 per cent to £23.4m but share earnings barely moved.

The £18m acquisition of Aerostructures Hamble at the end of 1995 still looks expensive. EIS admits the business, which has only just broken into profits, was in a shakier condition than it first thought and it is taking another £5.2m write-off. It should have been well warned: Aerostructures, which makes the leading edge of wings for plane makers such as Boeing, was one of the worst in a string of disastrous new issues a few years ago.

But its strenuous efforts to get key contracts for Boeing's 737-700 and the McDonnell Douglas MD 80/90 back on track are being rewarded in much increased business. Production of four wing sets a month for Boeing is set to more than double to 10 by the end of the year and recent forecasts by Smiths Industries suggest output of the aircraft could double again by 1999.

EIS is strongly geared into the rising civil aviation market, which accounts for around 60 per cent of the £225m sales out of the group's aircraft and precision engineering division. But the outlook for the other 40 per cent involved in defence is also increasingly rosy.

The other half of EIS, in oil, gas and petrochemicals engineering, is less exciting. The group claims to be attempting to move away from the sort of process engineering operation traditionally bedevilled by

Rising losses at
Chiroscience

Most biotechnology companies have still to sell a single product, yet many have proved brilliant at marketing themselves. Chiroscience is a case in point. The group has racked up ever-increasing losses, which grew by another 61 per cent to £18.7m in the year to February and are now 15 times the level of four years ago. Despite that, the group still had £51.4m in the bank earlier this year, raised from cash calls on its shareholders, and even after yesterday's 17.5p fall to 335p, it has a healthy market capitalisation of £354m.

The company has not been shy about selling the virtues of its drugs pipeline, which in-

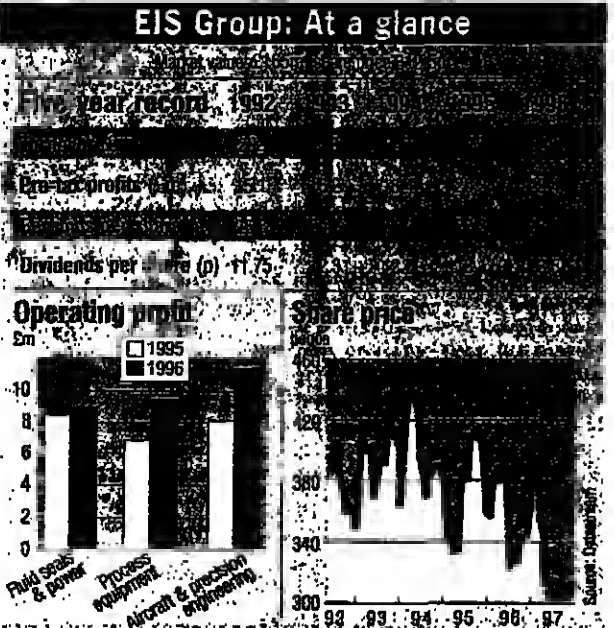
cludes a look-alike version of British Biotech's Marimastat anti-cancer drug and a non-steroidal asthma drug based on so-called PDE IV inhibitors. It is already claiming its matrix metalloproteinase drug for cancer and its asthma treatment offer reduced side effects. Yet the comparisons are being made against drugs some years away from the market, while the company's own treatments will only start to be tested in humans later this year.

More tangible evidence of progress came yesterday with news the Chirotech subsidiary had become the first part of Chiroscience to break into the black, recording profits of £1.2m last year. The business merely provides intermediate chemicals, admittedly sophisticated ones, to other pharmaceutical companies.

Chiroscience is promising an update next month on progress at Darwin Molecular, the US drug discovery operation acquired last year in another marketing coup, bringing in as it did Microsoft founder Bill Gates as a shareholder.

But more important is the outlook for Levobupivacaine, a more chemically pure version of an anaesthetic produced by Astra. That is no course to be submitted for approval in Europe this year.

But with so much riding on that single product, the shares remain speculative. A further cash call is also a real prospect, given that operating losses are set to rise to £25m this year.



Small beer is getting stronger

AIM-listed Surrey Free Inns may be small beer among pub chains of the scale of JD Wetherspoon or Enterprise Inns, but it has been going consistently in the right direction since it was returned to the black in 1993. Yesterday it took a further significant step in filling out its portfolio with the acquisition of Richardson Inns and Cash, with another £450,000 dependent on the performance of Highnoon.

The deal will be funded through a placing and one-for-eight open offer at 420p, raising £1.2m net of expenses. The move will add six inns and two café wine bars, including three in the City of London, to SFI's total of 30 sites, which includes the Litten Tree and Bar Med brands. Richardson Inns is a joint venture between the Richardson family and Whitbread, specialising in large, high-volume "super-pubs". However, SFI says it has no plans to keep the For Your Eyes Only bar in Park Royal, which features lap-dancing and was due to be joined by a sister operation in the City until the Richardson thought better of it. Gerald Richardson will join the SFI board and invest £1m in SFI shares.

SFI, which made profits of £1.19m in the year to the end of May last year, yesterday updated its previously reported interim figures, saying profits were £1.56m in the 36 weeks

to 9 February. It claimed the acquisition would add £7.5m to sales and £1.5m to profit in the first full year.

Whitbread sold its 4.5 per cent stake in SFI three months ago, but Regent Inns still has a 6.1 per cent stake and has yet to decide on whether to take up the new shares.

Analysts yesterday upped their profits forecast for the current year to £2.2m and to £4.75m for 1997/98, which puts the shares, up 5p at 455p, on just under 16 times forecast earnings. They are no longer cheap, but they look a good

each-way bet on a rapidly growing market or alternatively a take-out bid from a bigger, slower rival. The offer shares look worth a punt.

Forecasts give Halifax a £13bn valuation on its flotation

Clifford German

The Halifax Building Society could be worth almost £13bn when it converts to a bank and floats on the stock market at the end of May, according to analysts in the City after the building society yesterday released further financial details.

The society said yesterday it will issue 2.51 billion shares and it would have paid a dividend of 13.6p net out of earnings of 34.1p for the 11 months to the end of December. If the shares are valued on the same price earnings ratio as the A&L flotation last week, this would suggest a market price of 510p a share.

That in turn would value the minimum entitlement of 200 free shares at more than £1,000 and the average holding at £1,730. Eligible Halifax borrowers are entitled to 200 shares, investors with between £100 and £1,000 on their account will receive 200 shares, plus one extra share for every £50 held on the lower of the balances held on the two qualifying dates in November 1995 and February 1997.

The society also yesterday set a minimum price of 415p for the free shares it will auction on 30 May on behalf of any of its 7.6 million members who want their windfalls in cash. If offers from institutions fail to reach this they will not be sold without a fresh instruction from members.

Gary Marsh, head of corporate affairs at the Halifax, said: "We have set the minimum to reassure investors so that they know that we will not sell below

this amount. In this way they do not have to worry about the possible adverse impact of the election and any subsequent rise in interest rates on the value of their windfall."

Andrew Faulds and Mike Blackburn, Halifax chairman and chief executive respectively, will be touring City institutions to persuade them to bid higher than the 415p minimum. City sources suggested the minimum price of 415p per share will be comfortably exceeded at flotation on Monday 2 June, giving far bigger cash payouts to those who want to sell on that day.

The Halifax transfer document last December estimated the likely share value to be between 390p and 450p, since when shares in the banking sector have risen by an average of 18 per cent.

Matthew Pensonby, senior associate director at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, which is helping to oversee the book-building exercise, said he hoped the share price at flotation would be higher than the published floor, although he refused to speculate by how much.

Mr Marsh added that Halifax had considered a similar approach to Alliance & Leicester. The A&L, which floated last week, said that it would halt the sale of its shares if stock markets plunged by 20 per cent or more.

Members who want to sell must complete and return a form to the Halifax if they want it to sell their shares free of charge to institutional investors on 30 May, prior to the start of normal trading on the Monday.



City tour: Chief executive Mike Blackburn will be visiting institutions before the auction

Halifax executives are now hoping for an orderly run of sell orders rather than a last-minute rush close to the 26 May deadline, which they admitted might overwhelm the administration.

The Halifax also confirmed

yesterday that the maximum number of shares to be issued will be 2.51 billion, down 50 million from the original estimate.

The fall reflects the drop in the number of eligible members from the initial 8 million to 7.6

million, caused by members closing accounts, cutting balances below the minimum qualifying figure of £100 on the qualifying date of 24 February, or paying off mortgages in spite of the losing their membership privileges.

Quality
Care in
frame for
takeover

Magnus Grimond

Quality Care Homes, the Darlington-based nursing home group, saw its shares soar 37p to 311p yesterday after revealing that it was in bid talks. Any deal close to last night's closing price would put a price tag of £42.6m on the company and bring a windfall of more than £20m for the group's founder and executive chairman, Duncan Bannatyne, a local entrepreneur. Michael Fallon, the former Conservative sports minister, is another director who could be expected to benefit from any takeover.

The identity of the potential acquirer was not revealed yesterday, but speculation centred on an unnamed US real estate investment trust. Discussions are understood to have been under way for around two months, with the final offer expected to be close to the current market price. Two years ago, Mr Bannatyne, who with family trusts owns just over 50 per cent of the company, rejected a bid at 330p a share from Exelcor Health Care, an offshoot of the US nursing home group Sun Healthcare now renamed Ashbourne. CrestaCare, a rival British nursing home group, was also a disappointed bidder at that stage.

Yesterday, the only information from Quality Care was a short statement from the board saying it was involved in discussions which "may or may not lead to an offer for the company". It promised to keep shareholders informed of further developments.

The company has seen pre-tax profits rise steadily from £1.84m in 1992 to £5.61m in the 12 months to last October. However, Paul Saper of nursing home analysts Laing & Buisson said yesterday that the group would struggle to meet stockbrokers' forecasts of between £6.2m and £6.5m this year. He suggested that the actual figure would come in at under £5m, after deducting normal industry depreciation charges. The group would find the going increasingly tough as local authority budgets, the principal form of funding for private nursing homes, were squeezed even harder, he claimed.

Go-Ahead bid
puts drivers in
line for windfall

Terry Macalister

Scores of Brighton bus drivers yesterday found themselves in line for windfall payments of around £17,000 each following a recommended £5.76m takeover bid from the Go-Ahead Group to buy their company, Brighton Transport.

But the planned takeover by the fast-growing bus and rail group from the Gateshead-based Go-Ahead could be halted by intervention of the competition authorities which said last night they were looking at the case.

Martin Ballinger, managing director of Go-Ahead, is confident the deal will go through without a hitch. He said yesterday: "It would be very peculiar if this was referred, considering that Stagecoach and FirstBus have dominant positions in cities like Southampton and Portsmouth."

The Office of Fair Trading confirmed it was considering whether the Brighton Transport takeover fell within its remit. But a spokesman added: "We look at hundreds of these type of cases."

It would not be Go-Ahead's

first brush with the competition authorities. Two years ago it was forced to give undertakings to the Department of Trade after being accused by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of "predatory pricing" in the North-east of England.

The Go-Ahead Group has been operating rival Brighton & Hove bus services to Brighton Transport for four years. It has seen a significant increase in passenger volumes as the local authority discourages city-centre car use.

Go-Ahead, which also operates bus services in Oxford and London, saw its underlying interim profits to 28 December rise by 82 per cent to £12.2m. The company also operates the Thames Link and Thames Train services.

The proposed tie-up with Brighton Transport on the basis of 180p-per-Brighton-Transport share, has board approval. But the offer must still be approved by shareholders of Brighton Transport at an extraordinary general meeting.

Drivers and conductors are part of the 242 staff members who own Brighton Transport and its fleet of 84 buses and coaches.

McAlpine in bid
talks with Raine

Alfred McAlpine is in talks that may lead to an all-share offer for Raine, a rival building and construction group. The bid would be at a modest premium to Raine's share price of 19.5p, which values the group at almost £36m.

Analysts were reluctant to guess what the size of the "premium" that McAlpine would be prepared to pay, and one even suggested that news of the talks could flush out other bidders.

Howard Proctor, analyst at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, said that he had recommended a "cautious" stance on McAlpine, until the terms of the possible bid were announced. "Superficially, Raine appears to be a good fit, but we are suggesting waiting until it

becomes clearer what McAlpine are prepared to pay."

McAlpine's shares firmed up to 167.5p yesterday.

Leslie Kent, analyst at Mees-Pierson, said the premium McAlpine was prepared to pay was the "54,000 dollar question". However, he noted that Raine reported net assets of 32p a share at the end of last year.

Raine has a land bank of 300,000 plots with planning permission and "McAlpine have realised that what Raine needs is a big parent," Mr Kent said.

This is by no means cut and dry, and Raine could be made more offers once McAlpine have made theirs. It takes a bid to draw attention to a recovering company like Raine," Mr Kent added.

Kalamazoo 'breaches' hit shares

Kalamazoo Computer Group's shares plunged 22p to a three-year low of 77.5p yesterday following a profits warning, resulting from the discovery of "certain breaches" of internal control within the UK business solutions division.

Two operational managers at the division have been dismissed but are not being named for legal reasons. They left in the "last 10 days".

A brief statement by the company said the "division's management accounts do not reflect accurately its performance". A review of the breaches and internal controls is being conducted internally and with the assistance of auditors Deloitte & Touche.

Analysts had predicted a rise in profits to £7m, but now expect the full-year result to remain unchanged at £5.9m.

The company said the rest of its activities, particularly within the continental European computer division and the security print division, had performed in line with or ahead of expectations.

Kalamazoo said it would declare a final dividend of not less than the 1996 final payout of 3.05p a share when preliminary results are announced around 26 June.

IN BRIEF
Vega to buy CBL Technology for £5.5m

Vega Group said it had agreed to acquire CBL Technology, a software-based training company, for up to £5.5m and it had been selected as the preferred bidder for a £6m RAF training contract for providing a ground-based training facility for medium support helicopters. The company also said its current order book was ahead of last year, but the strength of sterling would leave this year's profits unchanged on last year. Vega said it expected the acquisition of CBL to be earnings enhancing from the outset. CBL reported pre-tax profits of £404,000 in the year to 31 March on sales of £1.7m.

Profits drop at Alexander Workwear

Alexander Workwear announced a drop in taxable profits from £5.3m to £1.1m for the year to 1 February. Dividend total, however, is maintained at 6.5p. The results included an exceptional charge of £2.8m, relating to the costs of the rationalisation and reorganisation of the group's manufacturing activities. Gerald Dennis, chairman, said: "Although it is too early to identify significant, lasting improvements in demand patterns, there is evidence of strengthening demand in the current year and sales are firm against the same period last year."

600 Group sells optical business

The 600 Group has agreed to sell Ealing Electro-Optics to Coherent Inc for £6m. Ealing Electro-Optics, which has operations in the UK and US, makes and distributes optical components and test systems. Coherent makes lasers and optical components, and is also based in the US and the UK. Ealing had a turnover in the financial year ending 31 March of £5.2m, and generated a profit before tax and interest of £250,000. The 600 Group intends to invest a proportion of the proceeds in expanding its international machine tool distribution network.

Allen Diesels wins £25m power contract

Rolls-Royce said its Allec Diesels subsidiary had won a £25m order from Iberfrica Power to upgrade the 45-megawatt Nairobi South power station project in Kenya. Allen Diesels will be responsible for all mechanical and electrical engineering and for the supply of eight 5.8-megawatt Niigata heavy fuel burning engines from Japan.

ITG seeks listing in London and Ireland

Independent Telecoms Group, one of the largest communications service providers in Ireland, is to seek a simultaneous listing on the Alternative Investment Market of the London Stock Exchange and the Developing Companies Market of the Irish Stock Exchange through a placing of 1.41 million shares at 148p. Proceeds of the placing will fund future development activities. Plans include the development of its payphone management business and evaluation of the potential in the UK communications market, which ITG said it hoped to enter. Since 1994, turnover has increased at a compound rate of 57 per cent per annum. It expects turnover for the year to end April next will be in excess of Ir£5.7m and predicts pre-tax profits of Ir£480,000.

Revelation Piccadilly profits jump

Revelation Piccadilly, the retailing group, reported an increase in pre-tax profits from £69,000 to £271,000 for the year to 23 February. The dividend is 0.079p. Stephen Barclay, chairman, said year-on-year sales were up 10 per cent in the first two months of the new financial year. "The group has entered the current year in a financially strong position. We have the resources to substantially improve profitability and cash generation both by opening new retail branches and by developing the distribution business through the introduction of new packaging, new products and new exclusive distribution arrangements," he said.

Bullough sells Pipeline subsidiary

Bullough has sold its Pipeline Engineering & Supply subsidiary to an investment syndicate led by Queser VCT for a total of £1.42m. Pipeline made pre-tax profits in the year to 31 October 1996 of £161,000, with net assets before inter-company debt at that date put at £1.37m.

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COMMENT

As long as the American economy is expanding so much faster than Japan and Germany, and until this growth causes its foreign trade deficit to balloon again, the US currency will tend to climb.

G7 'read my lips' declares open day on dollar

Watch what they do, not what they say. This was the currency dealers' eminently rational reaction yesterday to the flow of comments and communiqués from ministers, bankers and assorted officials gathered in Washington.

International officialdom says the dollar has gone far enough. It is not too strong, but as strong as they'd like. However, there is no sign that the G7 central banks will risk selling dollars for yen and marks when the economic fundamentals mean they would almost certainly make a loss on the transaction.

In these circumstances, the G7 statement is an invitation to the markets to push the dollar as far as they can, and traders are accepting the challenge. As long as the American economy is expanding so much faster than Japan and Germany, and until this growth causes its foreign trade deficit to balloon again, the US currency will tend to climb.

The weekend's meetings of the G7 and IMF also brought a warning of turmoil on the foreign exchanges if the single currency project is delayed. Here again, the fundamentals will rightly carry more weight than the officials.

It is fudge or failure, not delay, that will

invite speculative attacks on the weaker currencies in the foreign exchange markets. If any of the more peripheral European countries are going to be shoehorned into EMU for political reasons when they have not yet stabilised their budget deficits enough to fit, or if any of them does not make the expected progress on the fiscal front this year, then they will become vulnerable to attack. There is quite a good chance of EMU-related currency turmoil during the next 12 months, but the markets will not be diverted from creating genuine havoc by an official attempt to channel it in a particular direction.

Accept the apology and let the matter rest

Apologies as grovelling as the one issued by Sir Chips Kaswick yesterday over Hambros' role in the failed bid for the Co-operative Wholesale Society are rare in the City but there may be merit in making them the norm in scandals of this sort. Certainly Sir Chips' remorse provides an elegant and swift way of settling an affair which could have dragged on for years at considerable reputational and monetary cost not just to Hambros, but to the City more generally.

It may well be that the circumstances surrounding Hambros' role were so utterly damning that Sir Chips had little option but to agree that the Co-op and its advisers,

SBC Warburg, asked for, but if that were the case, then the Co-op would surely have been able to extract more. The usual practice in such affairs is for the triumphant City house to press home its advantage with regulators as vindictively and aggressively as possible. This is not always in the client's best interests since part of the purpose here is for the City adviser to do down his competitors. Too often, however, the result is a more general damage, both to the reputation of the City and because of the resulting regulatory crackdown, its freedom of manoeuvre.

This is not to argue that the City be able to sweep its more unsavoury episodes under the carpet by simply saying: "Sorry old chap, didn't mean it really. Here's your legal costs and now let's forget the whole thing ever happened." That plainly would not be a satisfactory way of proceeding. But in this case we know most of what happened.

The damage to Hambros and others involved is already considerable, so bad in the case of Hambros that its future as an independent investment bank must now be in doubt. The Regan affair has highlighted the desperate measures middle-ranking City banks will sometimes resort to in the search for fees and recognition. But little further retribution would be gained by pursuing the matter to the bitter end. On the other hand, another raft of regulatory red tape and rules for the City in general would be more or less guaranteed.

Obviously there will have to be disciplinary action against those shown to have breached professional standards. The City also needs urgently to examine more generally its standards of integrity and probity, a process the Bank of England and others will no doubt want to be involved in. But since nobody outside Mr Regan and his advisers and backers have been damaged by this episode, that is probably where matters ought to rest.

Launders is just the first one to get the boot

Football managers know that the writing is on the wall when the club chairman expresses his full confidence in them. Robin Launders, who parted company with Leeds United yesterday after less than a year in the chief executive's job, was afforded no such advance warning.

Indeed, the decision to "accept his resignation" after a hastily arranged meeting at the club's Elland Road ground evidently came as something of a bolt out of the blue for Mr Launders. He arrived at the club with a reputation as an effective, albeit abrasive manager, having been part of the troika associated with Manchester United's glittering success off the field as much as on it.

It was Mr Launders as finance director who was responsible for the redevelopment of the Old Trafford ground and the com-

mercialisation of the Manchester United name to the point where income from merchandising, catering and the like now comfortably exceeds gate revenues.

Since his arrival at Leeds its performance on the pitch has not exactly set the fans alight. But that is not Mr Launders' problem. The reverse takeover by Caspian provided the club with shareholders as well as supporters and whilst both went success on the field, Mr Launders came with a reputation as the wizard of the financial drible.

Like footballers themselves, however, track record is not necessarily a guarantee of future performance. Chris Akers, who chairs Caspian, has bankers as well as fans to keep happy. He wants to turn Elland Road into the Madison Square Gardens of the UK through his Project Arena - a £30m scheme to redevelop the ground into a property, leisure and multi-sports complex. Mr Launders, apart from lacking the team skills to rub along with the rest of the management, appears not to have been running at the same pace as his chairman.

It was always clear that the headlong rush towards stock market quotations by so many football clubs would produce casualties among investors. Mix in personalities of the likes of Sir John Hall at Newcastle and Mr Akers and it is a recipe for change in personnel as well. Mr Launders may be the first of the new breed of football chief executives to get the boot but he will surely not be the last.

Consumer optimism at highest level since 1980s

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Consumer confidence is back at its highest since the late 1980s, according to a new survey yesterday. Further evidence of the booming economy came from a strong pick-up in the commercial property market, although the housing market apparently paused for breath last month.

"It is clearly reminiscent of the last boom," said Geoffrey Dicks, an economist at NatWest Markets. "The good thing is that the election has come earlier in the cycle this time around, and the government will be able to

put down to the windfall gains and consumers are not seeing the Government as being responsible for these."

But he said the economy was not yet expanding on a late-1980s scale. "The connection between house prices, confidence and consumer spending, is not as strong this time around," he said.

Confidence rose fastest in the East Midlands and the North, but house price rises have been greatest in London and parts of the South-east.

There was some support for this view in mortgage lending figures published by the British Bankers' Association yesterday. Although the banks lent 10 per cent more than their recent monthly average in March, the BBA said this reflected an increase in their market share.

Tim Sweeney, director-general, said: "Overall demand for mortgage finance has been restrained somewhat." He suggested fears of higher interest rates after the election and a shortage of properties in some areas might be to blame.

The commercial property market has continued to see strong demand, according to a report from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors yesterday. Confidence in the sector was the highest since the survey began three years ago.

Graham Chase of Chase & Partners, a RICS spokesman, said: "Confidence seems to be strong across the regions." The difference between now and the late 1980s was the absence of much speculative development so far in this cycle, he said.

Despite the differences between this boom and the last one, all economists agree that the windfalls this year make for a great deal of uncertainty about how fast the economy will grow.

Mr Dicks said that even on a cautious assumption about how much of their windfalls people would spend, consumer spending would grow by 4 per cent this year. It would need to be reduced in order to head off the threat to inflation next year.

The feelgood factor is being put down to the windfall gains - David Fell, BSL director

Consumer optimism picked up sharply across the country in the first quarter of the year, according to a survey published by Business Strategies Ltd (BSL).

The consultancy found that, thanks to the prospect of free building society shares, optimism about the economy in general and household finances had risen markedly, while concern about unemployment was falling. The balance of optimism over pessimism, at 24 per cent, was the highest since mid-1988.

The survey reported that the South-east and the northern regions would gain most from the windfalls. The former has the biggest population in the UK, while savers in Yorkshire and the North-east will benefit most from the Halifax and Northern Rock conversions.

David Fell, BSL director, said: "The feelgood factor is be-



Surrey Free Inns the fast-growing operator of 30 superpubs and café bars which change their ambience to attract daytime and evening customers is buying Richardson Inns a joint venture between Whitbread and the Richardson family. Managing director Tony Hill (left) and his colleagues hold about 10 per cent of the £50m company. Gerald Richardson (right) will join the board of SFI and invest £1m in the enlarged group. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Enterprise unveils £100m swap

Michael Harrison

Enterprise Oil yesterday unveiled a £100m asset swap with BP which will strengthen its presence in the North Sea and end its involvement in the British Gas take-or-pay saga.

BP is exchanging its 43 per cent interest in the Pierce field in return for Enterprise's interests in two gas fields, Amethyst and Ravenspurn North.

The Pierce field contains an estimated 100 million barrels of oil and is due to go into production in the third quarter of next year. The asset swap will result in Enterprise becoming the operator of the field with a 74 per cent stake.

Pierce is next to the Nelson field in the central North Sea which contains an estimated 400 million barrels and is already operated by Enterprise. A spokesman said: "This asset swap sits

very happily with our strategy of building a modern portfolio of new oil assets."

The field will cost about £150m to bring on stream and involves building a floating production and storage vessel tied to wells located in two subsea centres. The go-ahead for the development is expected in the middle of the year. The other companies with an interest in Pierce are Ranger Oil, MOC Exploration, Agip and Santos.

Mark Hope, Enterprise's technical director, said: "This is good news for both companies. Enterprise will be able to maximise the potential of Pierce through our experience in the central North Sea and BP will be able to derive greater value from the assets in which they are already significant players."

The asset swap will increase BP's interest in Amethyst to 45.4 per cent and in Ravenspurn North to 33.5 per cent.

Fraud hearing to pit Lloyd's against SEC

Terry Macalister

The Securities and Exchange Commission is poised to intervene unexpectedly against Lloyd's of London in a critical legal case opening in the US today. The world's oldest insurance market is fighting to stop itself facing for the first time allegations of fraud brought by an American investor in a US court.

The legal battle, Charles Leslie vs Lloyd's, will be heard in the fifth circuit of the New Orleans Court of Appeal. It follows an earlier ruling in favour of Robert Leslie, a 74-year-old Texan investor who wants to sue Lloyd's in the US.

The insurance market has so far successfully argued in other US courts that any actions against it should be brought before British judges. But it lost the first round against Mr Leslie in a Texas district court.

A Lloyd's spokesman last night said the market was confident it would overturn the Texas decision with this appeal. "Five other appeal courts in the US have upheld our view. We think they have not followed precedent in this case."

But the involvement of the SEC could be influential. Its counsel, Richard Walker, has been given leave to appear and is expected to give weight to Mr Leslie's case.

Lloyd's is unhappy about the SEC's role. A Lloyd's spokesman said: "The commission has yet to rule whether being a member of Lloyd's is indeed a security. Given this is the case, it is an odd intervention [by Mr Walker]."

While the latest legal skirmish starts in New Orleans, a Lloyd's working party was finalising a report last night that could lead to the death of the traditional individual investor, or name, in favour of corporate capital.

The syndicate structure working party has in effect concluded that the individual names structure is enormously expensive. Further, the involvement of names makes it difficult for investment decisions to be made for more than one year at a time.

Under the existing Lloyd's rules, names form new syndicates - or annual ventures - every year. It has been estimated that the cost of doing this alone could amount to £100m and the abolition of the members' intermediary network could save a further £50m, according to figures from accountants KPMG.

The working party, whose report must be endorsed by the Lloyd's ruling council before any action is taken on it, will not come up with any definite recommendation on the future of names.

One of the working party members said: "The report will just give the bare facts. But these clearly indicate that the way forward is for names to convert to becoming limited liability shareholders."

Chris Stockwell, chairman of the Lloyd's Names Association, said that the report was the latest in a series of actions aimed at squeezing out names.

"Lloyd's has financially destroyed the first one-third and is now dealing with the rest."

Sudden upswing pushes PEP sales to new high

Nic Cicuttini
Personal Finance Editor

A last-minute surge of investment during the few days before the end of the 1996-97 tax year helped sales of PEPs reach record heights, according to figures released yesterday by the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (AUTIF).

Net PEP sales reached £6.2bn in the year to April, up 44 per cent on the previous 12 months. Autif said. Net PEP sales in the first quarter of this

year reached £1.9bn, below the record £2bn figure for sales during the second quarter of last year.

However, a final flood of £797m into unit trust PEPs in the first few days of April helped push the annual total to its record high.

Philip Warland, director general at Autif, said: "PEP sales continue to reach new heights. Sales just for March were on a par with the total for the whole of 1992. The growth in the number of regular savers plan

holders shows that the use of unit trusts is becoming part of the nation's savings habits."

"Investors need transparent, simple investment products with good performance and unit trust PEPs are able to match these needs perfectly."

The sudden upswing in sales followed concern among fund managers that despite a massive advertising push in the weeks prior to the 5 April tax deadline, investors were refusing to commit themselves to equity investments.

Fears over US interest rate rises and their potential impact on US and UK equity markets were cited as reasons for investors' reluctance to commit themselves. The looming general election was also said to have caused the initial go-slow.

However, a last-minute sales push helped convince many that direct equity investment was the long-term answer to safer but low interest rates.

Net retail sales of £1.075bn, those bought by small investors, more than doubled in March

from £483m in February. They also rose from £1.025bn in March 1996.

By contrast, however, unit trust sales to institutions dropped £596m to barely £300m in March, compared to the near £900m in sales recorded the previous month. Some 40 per cent of that went into the international growth sector, while there was a net outflow of £45m from European funds.

Autif said yesterday that a significant slice of sales in March were in the UK growth and UK

growth and income sectors, which company sales force contributed £122m and independent financial advisers all told more than doubled their previous record to £75m.

However, funds which track the performance of the FTSE world, new 100 or All-Share indexes too to record a 100 per cent of the £204.4 in the ATIF poured into the growth and income sector, confirming the off the best growing dominance of these a strong PEPs sold over the telephone boom, a growing number of companies, including Virgin.

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market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100	4389.7	+20.0
FTSE 250	4494.2	-4.3
FTSE 350	2150.4	+7.4
SEAQ VOLUME	678.1m shares	
	52,074 bargains	
Gifts Index	93.63	+0.17

Share spotlight



P&G presentation could kick Unilever off the stage

Every so often Procter & Gamble tempts the stock market by holding a City investment presentation. Such an event, expected today, invariably prompts talk of the US detergent behemoth, not quoted in London, is planning to swoop on a UK enterprise.

Reckitt & Colman, the household toiletries group where many suspect Unilever courses predatory ambitions, could be in P&G's sights. Unilever, the Anglo Dutch food and soaps giant, has clearly grown beyond the reach of the Ariel to Fairy group.

Such is the fierce competition between P&G and Unilever that some wonder whether the Americans are merely intent on upstaging Unilever, due to produce first-quarter figures on Friday. Many believe the US group just wants to emphasise its UK presence and underline its ability to strike at a target, if it so desires.

Unilever appeared to be untroubled by the prospect of its deadly rival hobnobbing with City fund managers and analysts. Its shares were unchanged at 1,623.5p, near their peak. Reckitt dipped 7p to 830.5p.

Blue chips, swayed again by New York, were off form with Footsie gaining 20 points to 4,389.7. The supporting FTSE 250 index was rather less enthusiastic. On the surface it looked a fairly active session. But in reality the market was merely marking time with tiddlers like Dragon Oil (3.5p) and Minmet (5.5p) making a near 10 per cent contribution to volume.

Financials, seen as relatively immune from the expected Government change, once again were the major influences behind Footsie's romp. The underweight position of many fund managers was the other consideration. Once Hal-



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

ifax and the rest have followed Alliance & Leicester onto the market many funds are likely, under their own articles, to be short of financial shares. So the desire to quickly increase representation in the financial sector, be it banks or insurances, is understandable.

The banks once again stormed ahead, led by Lloyds TSB with a 19p gain to 576p. Insurances joined the romp. Prudential Corporation rose 15p to 591p and Legal & General 8p to 408.5p.

Cable & Wireless Communications touched 306.5p, closing at 299.5p. The result of a four-way merger it is the na-

tion's second-largest telephone company and largest cable operation with a value of around £4.5bn. Cable & Wireless greeted its offspring with a 7.5p gain to 479p.

Hambros, the merchant bank halted its slide with a grovelling apology to the Co-op. After falling 10.5p, the price rallied to 242p, up 5p.

Vickers, still suffering from a profit warning, climbed 3.5p to 210.5p following support from BZW and ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

Caspian, the Leeds Utd group run by Chris Akers, fell 2p to 26.5p (against a year's high of 46.75p) as Robin Lambers, ex-Manchester Utd finance director, quit as chief executive. His departure occurs as Borden Leisure, the old Mosaic Investments which acquired Bolton Wanderers, is due to return to market. Mosaic was suspended at 53p; the shares could kick off today at 75p.

TLG, the old Thorn Lighting, was little changed at 112p as Wassall, the ambitious conglomerate, lifted its stake to 5.6 per cent.

Quality Care Homes jumped 37p to 311p after saying a bid loomed. Two years ago chairman Duncan Banatyne rejected an offer from Sun Health, a US company. He has around half of the capital. Raine, the builder, firmed 0.25p to 19.25p as Alfred McAlpine emerged as the likely bidder.

Another profit warning lowered WEW, the retailer, 2.5p to 16.5p; BSM, blaming the written element of the driving test, reversed 38p to 103.5p after signalling profit problems. Shield Diagnostic continued to feel the impact of director sales, falling 47.5p to 480p.

Partners, a stationery chain placed at 150p, rose to 169.5p. Epic Multimedia put on 3p to 20p on its Abbey National link. Dragon Oil remained the in-demand share, gaining 0.75p to 3.5p with turnover hitting almost 55 million. Still with around 5.5 billion shares in issue there is plenty of scope for trading the stock. Like so many tertiary oils there are, now it is on the move, a variety of stories flying around; they include bullish talk about its Thailand prospect and growing optimism over the likely returns from its Caspian Sea strike. In August the shares were 1p.

Each week Emerald Energy, the oil hopeful, issues a statement about its drilling in Colombia. The idea is to prevent the rumour mill sending out what could be false signals. But mobile telephones may be beating the company. Chairman Iain Alexander believes handsets from the depth of the Colombian jungle are providing the City with more frequent progress reports than the weekly one offered by Emerald. Whether radio phones were in action yesterday is not yet clear but Emerald jumped 0.75p to 5.75p in busy trading. The company's communiqué is due tomorrow.

VFC, supplying film equipment for such shows as *Coronation Street* and *Rak Practice*, held at 38.5p as stockbroker Ellis & Partners forecast profits this year would top £1m against £266,000.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: 1st digit is 10p; 2nd digit is 5p; 3rd digit is 1p; 4th digit is 0.5p. Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

The Index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0800 123 333, and when prompted to do so, enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0800 123 333 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.

Index	Code	Index	Code
FTSE 100	01	Starting Rates	04
UK Stock Market Report	02	Bullion Report	05
UK Company News	03	Wall St Report	06
Foreign Exchange	07	Tokyo Market	08

Anyone with a line-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of the Independent Index, including its benefits, call 0800 123 333. For assistance, call our helpline 071 475 4376 (9am-5pm). Calls cost 80p per minute. Call charges include VAT.

1987						Index						1987						Index								
High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Ytd	Price	Chg	Ytd	PRE	Code	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Ytd	PRE	Code	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Ytd	PRE	Code
35 1/2	27 1/2	Moordale	27 1/2	+	23	400					145	107	Palencia Bay	80					71	123	30					
17 1/2	15 1/2	Moubray	15 1/2	+	22	125					402	285	Roncalli B	408	x-1				55	284	55					
84	78	Murphy A	78	+	4	148	3435				145	100	Florida G	84	x-4				56	148	56					
													Palencia Bay	80					55	148	55					

FTSE 100 index hour by hour	14.00	14.30	15.00
09.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0
10.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0
11.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0
12.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0
13.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0
14.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0
15.00	4389.7	4393.0	4393.0

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100	100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100
100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

Low	High	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Low	High	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100	100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100
100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

Low	High	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Low	High	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100	100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100
100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

Low	High	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Low	High	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol
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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100	100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100
100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100	100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100
100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

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100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100	100	95	Barclays	100	+5	100
100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100	100	95	HSBC	100	+5	100
100	95	Shell	100	+5	100	100	95	Shell	100	+5	100
100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100	100	95	British Airways	100	+5	100
100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100	100	95	British Petroleum	100	+5	100

صكنا من الالصل

Squalls face world's role model

We are preoccupied this week, for obvious reasons, with the balance sheet of the market reforms of the previous 18 years - the pluses and the minuses of economic policy of nearly two decades. One of the points frequently made is that there is now an Anglo-American economic model of capitalism significantly different from the continental European ones, or from the Japanese.

And while the Anglo-American system seems to be gaining ground internationally in the sense that many of its facets are being adopted by continental Europe and Japan, it would be astounding were there not some kind of backlash. Here in Britain, we may see some of that backlash this week: not just a change of political direction, but at least some hopes among many voters of a change in economic direction too. But in the US there is nothing of this. Administrations change, but the economic model is virtually unquestioned. Why?

One part of the answer must surely lie in the success of the US economy in creating jobs. By comparison to continental Europe the UK has been relatively successful at getting its unemployment rate down, and it is now creating jobs at a reasonable rate. But it is nothing like as impressive an engine of job-creation as the US.

In the past six years the US has created 12.5 million new jobs, an increase of more than 11 per cent. A little over 1 million were in the public sector, and the largest single new group were in private sector services, mostly in small and medium-sized firms. The growth of the past decade is shown in the chart on the right.

But there have been no net new jobs in manufacturing. Of course there have been some new manufacturing jobs, but gains have been more than offset by losses with the result that total manufacturing employment is below the level of 1991. No new jobs and rising output has resulted in excellent productivity gains, since 1991 averaging around 4 per cent. Output per person in manufacturing in the US is 21 per cent higher than it was in 1991. The result of this is that unit labour



Hamish McRae

While the Anglo-American system seems to be gaining ground in the sense that many of its facets are being adopted elsewhere it would be astounding were there not some kind of backlash

costs have hardly risen since 1991 (see left-hand chart). The economy as a whole has created jobs without creating excessive inflation. This raises a number of questions. One, posed by the economic team at Kleinwort Benson, which

dug out the statistics noted above, is whether this performance can continue. They believe it can. The present growth will slow and so will wage pressures, but it is contained. And the productivity gains will continue. If that is right, and the good US performance is not largely a cyclical phenomenon - the result of a long expansion - then export-led growth of the US economy to continue to be exported into the Continent and Japan.

But that is the American part of the model. What about the "Anglo" bit? One part of the market reforms embraced by Britain but not by the US is reform of the state sector, in particular privatisation. The US did not privatise because of having nationalised in the first place, it didn't need to. That clearly continues outside the UK, and perhaps within it. (One of the reasons for the early election in France is to seek voter support not just for the single currency but also for continuation of the privatisation programme, which has been pushed back by opposition from the left.)

Whether other features of the Anglo-American system continue, like reliance on stock market finance rather than bank finance and flexible labour markets, will depend on whether the two economies continue to be perceived from abroad as successes. If they continue to grow faster than continental Europe and Japan - if the present performance is not just a cyclical phenomenon - they presumably will. If the European economies catch up, the model will come to be less admired.

Medium- and long-term fore-

casts of growth are either brave or useless, or perhaps both. But I was interested by some numbers in the annual "Strategy 2000" exercise carried out by BZW, which tries to apply a long-term view to investment. The logic of this is to try and look at which countries and which sectors will do well over the next few years, and then to draw investment conclusions from that.

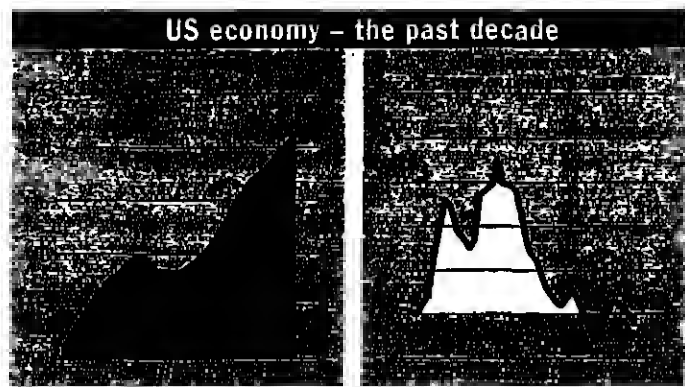
As part of this exercise, BZW did two things. One was to come up with some five-year growth forecasts; the other to put a whole series of variables together, from demography to scientific achievement, and see what that implied for living standards.

On the forecasts, the Group of Seven order ran as follows: Canada (3.2 per cent trend growth), Japan (2.8 per cent), US and UK (2.5 per cent), Italy (2.4 per cent), and France and Germany (2.2 per cent).

That is quite interesting in the sense that the US and UK do come out a touch higher than the large continental economies, but the margin is small and in any case Canada and Japan do better.

On the less precise assessment of changes in living standards, though, the US and UK come out clearly top, while at the bottom come Japan and Germany. The criteria are: changes in the dependency ratio, imports of capital goods, access to information, labour market flexibility and number of scientific citations. These may seem an arbitrary set of variables, and of course they are. Nevertheless the results are interesting in the sense that the Anglo-American model appears the best at generating a rise in living standards - or rather the most likely to generate a rise - over the next decade.

What should one conclude from all this? I think the main message is that the intellectual sea-change which took place during the early 1980s on how developed economies should be run, and that accordingly the Anglo-American model will continue to be applied elsewhere. That is not to claim that the model is optimal; rather it is to say that the onus is on the opponents to come up with something better. If they don't, the model rolls on.



Chip off the old block had an auspicious start to life

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Made to last: A example of Chippendale's work

I had not realised until now that Sir Chips Keswick, chairman of Hambros Bank, got his Christian name because he was conceived on a Chippendale.

Whether this was a Chippendale chaise-longue or chair is not clear, although I am happy to provide a picture of an example of the 18th-Century master craftsman's handiwork. Who knows, this may be the very chair.

Andrew Regan's failed bid for the Co-op throws up other strange stories. The two corporate financiers who opposed each other in the bid battle once worked with each other, or at least for the same bank.

Peter Large, the Hambros man who advised Mr Regan on the bid, was until September 1995 the managing director of SBC Warburg's corporate finance arm. This was just after the merger of SG Warburg and SBC in July 1995. And of course Brian Keelan, who has been advising the Co-op during the fracas, has been with SBC since 1989. He is now managing director of corporate finance at the merged bank.

With Mr Keelan victorious and Mr Large awaiting the outcome of the various enquiries into the Regan affair, I wonder if the former colleagues will still be exchanging Christmas cards this year.

Apicms, the Association of Private Client Investment Managers & Stockbrokers, has announced the retirement of founder chairman John Cobb and appointment of his successor, Michael Read of Greig Middleton.

Mr Cobb, 65, said yesterday: "Since our founding seven years ago, we have fought many battles on major issues such as Taurus, Rolling Settlement and Crest. We have opposed the excesses of the regulators, have promoted our members' services and defended their interest in an institutionally-dominated world."

Mr Read, 54, is a founder director of Greig Middleton, now the UK's largest retail stockbroker. He heads the investment management department, with £7.5bn under management.

He is also the fifth generation of his family to be a stockbroker. Hopefully this will help him deal with the expected avalanche of share deals from the current spurge of building society flotations.

My thanks to Barry Lloyd of Safroon Waldon, Essex, for the following missive: "I noted that in the party political broadcast by Tony Blair he made coffee in his kitchen in a Cable TV industry mug."

"Is the Labour Party now accepting product placements and if so was this not rather misplaced considering Mr Blair has promised his support to BT?"

Mathew Ponsonby, senior associate director of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, is in charge of the Halifax flotation. Future shareholders may like to know that he has a distinguished heritage.

One of Mr Ponsonby's ancestors was a cavalry officer at the Battle of Waterloo. Sitting on his horse near the Duke of Wellington,

commander of the allied forces arrayed against Napoleon, Ponsonby's leg was blown off by a cannonball. Looking down he exclaimed: "By God Sir, I've lost my leg."

To which the Iron Duke, unperturbed, replied: "By God Sir, so you have."

I believe another Ponsonby ancestor participated in the Charge of the Light Brigade, although I expect the dialogue wasn't quite as good. No doubt the present Mr Ponsonby's efforts will be more successful, if not so glorious.

"The Romance of Buried Treasure" is a fascinating chapter from *The Art of Speculation*, a book by Wall Street investment guru Philip L. Carret. It was obviously written with recent mining share scandals such as Bro-X in mind, where thousands of investors lost out when mining investments went wrong. Mr Carret writes: "Victims of the financial underworld, the proverbial widows and orphans who place their funds in worthless securities, are prone to select mining and oil stocks as the vehicles of their misfortune. There is undeniably a certain glamour about the adventure of extracting its mineral wealth from the earth's crust."

The book was written in 1930 and is being reissued as an investment classic. As far as throwing money at holes in the ground goes, however, it proves that nothing changes.

United News & Media has promoted Gerry Wilton chief executive of its broking companies, Harlow Butler and Garban. In addition to his previous responsibilities for the broking businesses in Europe and Asia he will now add the businesses in North and South America. Although Lord Hollick's company may be best known for its Express newspaper titles, it also owns the largest integrated money and securities broking group in the world.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
US	1.6284	1.6284	1.6284	1.6284	1.6284
Canada	0.6700	0.6700	0.6700	0.6700	0.6700
Germany	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363
France	1.6356	1.6356	1.6356	1.6356	1.6356
Italy	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363
Japan	163.26	163.26	163.26	163.26	163.26
UK	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Spain	166.36	166.36	166.36	166.36	166.36
Sweden	10.46	10.46	10.46	10.46	10.46
Norway	136.46	136.46	136.46	136.46	136.46
Denmark	136.46	136.46	136.46	136.46	136.46
Netherlands	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363
Ireland	0.7876	0.7876	0.7876	0.7876	0.7876
Belgium	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363
Switzerland	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363	1.9363
Australia	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
New Zealand	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Saudi Arabia	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Singapore	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Argentina	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Australia	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Brazil	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Canada	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
China	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
France	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Germany	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
India	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
Japan	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478
UK	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478	1.5478

Interest Rates

Country	Rate	Term
US	5.00%	1 month
UK	5.00%	1 month
Germany	5.00%	1 month
France	5.00%	1 month
Italy	5.00%	1 month
Japan	5.00%	1 month
Canada	5.00%	1 month
Australia	5.00%	1 month
New Zealand	5.00%	1 month
Saudi Arabia	5.00%	1 month
Singapore	5.00%	1 month

Bond Yields

Country	Rate	Term
US	5.00%	1 month
UK	5.00%	1 month
Germany	5.00%	1 month
France	5.00%	1 month
Italy	5.00%	1 month
Japan	5.00%	1 month
Canada	5.00%	1 month
Australia	5.00%	1 month
New Zealand	5.00%	1 month
Saudi Arabia	5.00%	1 month
Singapore	5.00%	1 month

Money Market Rates

Country	Rate	Term
US	5.00%	1 month
UK	5.00%	1 month
Germany	5.00%	1 month
France	5.00%	1 month
Italy	5.00%	1 month
Japan	5.00%	1 month
Canada	5.00%	1 month
Australia	5.00%	1 month
New Zealand	5.00%	1 month
Saudi Arabia	5.00%	1 month
Singapore	5.00%	1 month

Tourist Rates

Country	Rate	Term
US	5.00%	1 month
UK	5.00%	1 month
Germany	5.00%	1 month
France	5.00%	1 month
Italy	5.00%	1 month
Japan	5.00%	1 month
Canada	5.00%	1 month
Australia	5.00%	1 month
New Zealand	5.00%	1 month
Saudi Arabia	5.00%	1 month
Singapore	5.00%	1 month

Life Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Est/Cont	Open Interest
Long Gilt	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Gilt	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Euro	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Euro	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Long Yen	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short Yen	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Life FTSE 100 Index Option

Series	Strike	Call/Put	Price
Series 1	12000	Call	120.00
Series 2	12000	Put	120.00
Series 3	12000	Call	120.00
Series 4	12000	Put	120.00

Commodity Indices

Index	Value	Change
Oil	100.00	10.00
Gold	100.00	10.00
Silver	100.00	10.00
Copper	100.00	10.00

Industrial Metals

Aluminium	Price	Change
Aluminium	100.00	10.00
Copper	100.00	10.00
Lead	100.00	10.00
Nickel	100.00	10.00
Zinc	100.00	10.00

Precious Metals

Platinum	Price	Change
Platinum	100.00	10.00
Gold	100.00	10.00
Silver	100.00	10.00

Agricultural

Cocoa	Price	Change
Cocoa	100.00	10.00
Wheat	100.00	10.00
Barley	100.00	10.00

Other Softs

Latex	Price	Change
Latex	100.00	10.00
Rubber	100.00	10.00
Soybean	100.00	10.00

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Unit Trust	Price	Change
Unit Trust 1	100.00	10.00
Unit Trust 2	100.00	10.00
Unit Trust 3	100.00	10.00

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fleet & executive cars

A SPECIAL REPORT

With traffic issues taking a back seat in the election campaign, John Blauth finds it's a good time to make a purchase

A driving force the politicians forget

Sales of new cars have slowed right down: private buyers are putting off purchasing until they feel more confident about the realities of life under a newly elected government. Businesses are easing up because the staff expansion that led to big sales surges earlier this year have also tended to go on hold.

Nevertheless, life in the world of new cars has rarely been busier. New models are being launched weekly while updates of existing ones fill in the gaps between.

Manufacturers are edging back into the discounting game and offering dealers bonuses for registering cars early in their attempts to claim market penetration positions which are meaningless to their customers. Of far greater importance to the car buying and driving public is the current debate on car usage.

We are steadily approaching national gridlock as too many cars chase too few yards of road.

The argument of the final few years of the decade is what is going to be done to solve this problem?

In the 1960s we were promised a motorway network of at least 6,000 miles. Today, with a total car population approaching 24 million, we have fewer than 3,000 miles.

This is one of the forgotten facts in the anti-car, anti-roads war which is waging in nearly every available media forum. Facts have been replaced by populist sound bites, ignorance and, in the case of most political utterances on the subject, crass stupidity.

The UK, in common with every other western economy, travels by car; those 23 million-plus cars are driven by people – voters for the most part – and they are used for vital tasks that include getting to and from work, in the course of work and, equally importantly, for leisure. If the car and the industry that supports it were to disappear,

Britain would simply cease to function.

Congestion is the sole problem we face. Today's car is clean, well built, safe and generally reliable. The industry that supports our motoring habit is better trained and better regulated than most.

But too many cars and insufficient road space remain the great conundrum: improved, cheap, even free, public transport is clearly not the answer because trains and buses do not operate from where you are to where you want to go. You have to get to them, and therein lies their great flaw. For the salesman, repairman, engineer or parent delivering school child, the car remains the only sensible, logical and efficient option.

This, in turn, leads to the inescapable conclusion that we need more roads to cope with the needs of the people. It's either that or self-denial by some so that the others of us can



Taken for a ride? Vital problems of congestion remain untackled by the two main parties

ride. Who is willing to take the first step?

As the election looms, this issue – which affects the vast majority of UK citizens – remains untackled and unanswered. The issues encompass practical policies and costs and

neither of the two main contenders have statements of consequence to make on either. It is left to the hopefuls in the Green and Liberal Democrat parties to get off the fence.

The Labour manifesto devotes five paragraphs to road transport and cites an "integrated transport policy" as one of its pledges. This is neither defined nor explained and the only specific is that there will be

a strategic review of road-building requirements.

The Conservative manifesto, equally short on the subject, says that the party will encourage the manufacture of more fuel-efficient cars and will aim to reduce road congestion by reducing the current 33 police control centres with five regional control centres instead.

In other words, nothing new, nothing radical and nothing to sort out the problems.

In contrast the Liberal Democrats plan to add 4p per litre in fuel tax and hit 1.6-litre and over cars with road tax of £145 while those with smaller engines will pay just £10. The party also plans to introduce road pricing in congested areas (which may, of course, move the congestion to cheaper avenues).

The Green Party plans to introduce much higher fuel taxation to encourage what it calls "mileage-consciousness" among drivers. It is also in favour of 20mph speed limits in

some city areas, along with traffic-calming measures and a national 55mph speed limit.

Too many votes in it, is the general view, to do anything radical about traffic and congestion. But one thing is clear: whoever takes over at No 10 on Friday, the cost of motoring will rise ahead of inflation for some years to come.

Meanwhile, this is a good time to acquire your new car. The motor trade will bite your arm off with eagerness, offering discounts, finance deals and trade-in deals. The bargains are all from the lower and upper medium sector of the market: the upper end, where Mercedes holds court with Jaguar, BMW, Audi, Saab and Volvo has seen growth this year but no one expects this trend to last.

Generally the outlook is gloomy in the short- and medium-term, with only cynic manufacturers looking remotely cheerful. Repairs, it seems, will always be with us.



Contract hire may be the new way to run a Vauxhall Vectra

Your new car that you will never own

Martin Derrick

The UK has Europe's most sophisticated and advanced automotive contract hire and leasing industry, but it has not been an outstanding success at getting its message over.

Ask any senior executive in the industry and they will tell you, hand on heart, that a finance director or fleet manager who has not seriously looked into the benefits and advantages of contract hire or leasing is simply not doing their job. For virtually every fleet, they will argue, there is at least one specialised package that will result in greater choice, more efficiency, lower cost, improved security, and even improved employee satisfaction.

And yet only around 50 per cent of Britain's businesses running company cars are currently enjoying the peace of mind that comes from being able to budget fleet costs accurately, benefiting from lower costs thanks to the contract hire industry's buying power, or enjoying the fruits of the industry's experience and expertise.

So if the business community is still sitting on the contract hire fence, is it any wonder that the vast majority of private car buyers are also still treading the road of bank loans and HP when it comes to financing their latest set of wheels?

To be fair to Joe Public, he is suffering the added indignity of being unable to recover VAT on monthly rentals, so the cost can look frighteningly steep. Yet there is a growing belief in the contract hire industry that there is a potential goldmine in personal contract hire of one or another. Initially, the concept is likely to spring from within the corporate sector – businesses, in effect, organising contract hire for employees who have chosen to take a cash alternative, or for employees not eligible for a company car.

Lex Vehicle Leasing, the UK's largest contract hire company, launched a Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) scheme in January this year, called Lex FreeChoice. It has set target of 400 cars this year from employees of companies which are already its big fleet customers.

The first customer to go live was LucasVarity, which already has 1,800 cars on contract hire on Lex and which is now offering FreeChoice to all its employees. But the biggest customer is likely to be BT, which is to offer all its 250,000 employees and pensioners the opportunity to take out their own PCP.

To avoid tax problems, Lex

spent more than £25,000 getting specialist advice and the scheme has been signed off by the Inland Revenue, but marketing director Richard Koster warns that there can be dangers: "Bringing a PCP scheme to the market is very complex and we recommend that employers look closely at a product before taking it on board. We at least recommend taking advice from your local tax office."

Under the scheme, employees pay a fixed monthly fee for 24 or 36 months and can then either make a final payment and keep the car, or else hand the car back and start a new contract.

A similar scheme has been launched by Lease Plan UK, called Freedomdrive. Under it, private buyers can enjoy all the benefits of contract hire, including accident management, a replacement vehicle, maintenance and even insurance, all for a fixed monthly rental.

"It's a tax neutral option and it gives individuals access to our organisation, infrastructure and buying power," said Steve Dunn, commercial director at Lease Plan. "I don't believe that personal car leasing is top of many people's minds yet but increasingly human resources departments are asking for more flexible benefit packages – and this is where a PCP scheme can count. It's an idea whose time is just about to come."

The major motor manufacturers have also recognised the need to offer new finance packages to customers. For example, Citroën has Elect 3 and Ford has both Acumen personal leasing and Options personal contract purchase plans.

The schemes have been set up in preparation for a change in personal buying habits – if the British public can be persuaded to follow the example set by US buyers. There, leasing consumer goods has been normal activity for the past 30 years. In the UK, it will take a major culture change for people to understand that they can drive a brand new car every two or three years, at reasonable cost but without ever owning the asset.

The motor manufacturers, almost all of which have now set up personal contract purchase and personal contract hire schemes, clearly believe that radical change in mind-set is going to happen.

But if it is proving so difficult to persuade those responsible for around half of Britain's company cars that it is in their interests to switch to contract hire or leasing, it may be a very long time before private buyers here change en masse to the American way of leasing.

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People carriers get a shrinking feeling

Martin Derrick

A couple of years ago, if you wanted an MPV – or multi-purpose vehicle – you chose a Renault Espace. Renault didn't exactly invent the concept of the people carrier – though it likes to let people think it did. That honour probably goes to Fiat, whose Multipla model of the 1960s showed how six adults could be seated in a small vehicle by the simple expedient of raising the roof and fitting three rows of seats.

Renault's breakthrough with the original Espace was to provide those same three rows of seats but in a vehicle that offered a heady combination of style, comfort and safety features. It also promised flexibility of use, with seven seats able to be removed or refitted at will, folded down to make tables, and even swivelled around to face each other. Demand was im-

mediate and strong – despite the fact that with seven seats fitted, there was virtually no luggage space whatsoever – and a new market niche, the MPV sector, had been created. Though Toyota, Nissan and Mitsubishi got into the MPV act quite quickly, the European manufacturers adopted a watching brief for some years and then all together decided in the early 1990s that MPVs were an essential element in their model line-ups. In 1995 the jointly developed Ford Galaxy, Volkswagen Sharan and Seat Alhambra were launched – identical vehicles with different names. The same year, another joint venture saw the Peugeot 806, Citroen Synergie, Fiat Ulysse and Lancia Z launched – again, identical vehicles – though the Lancia was never marketed in the UK.

Even then, there was no slowing up in the breathless pace of new MPV launches: the Mercedes-Benz V-Class and Honda Shuttle joined the fray in 1996 and in the past few months an all-new Renault Espace, the American Chrysler Voyager, the American-built Vauxhall Sintra, the smaller Toyota Picnic, smaller still Renault Scenic and smallest of all Daihatsu Move and Suzuki Wagon R+ have all been revealed.



Space age: there is room for six people and their luggage in the neat, easy to manoeuvre Toyota Picnic

Is there really a need – or indeed a demand – for all these new MPVs? Richard Mackay, managing director of Chrysler Jeep UK, is adamant that there is still room for new players, and he argues especially for the Voyager. Since its original launch in the USA in 1983, over six million Chrysler Voyagers have been sold around the globe. "Yes, there are plenty of competitors to choose from, but just how many can claim to be the world's first proper MPV?

Just how many can claim to be the world's best-selling MPV? And just how many can lay claim to that magic ingredient: the Voyager heritage?" he asks. The Voyager – and more particularly the long-wheelbase Grand Voyager – are very big vehicles, offering more than just seven seats: they have loads of luggage space too. In this respect, the Voyagers are among the more practical MPVs on offer. But not everyone needs acres of space and some manufacturers are beginning to develop what at first sounds something of a contradiction in terms – smaller MPVs.

Toyota's Picnic, for example, offers comfort and space for six people and their luggage in a compact package that is neat, simple to manoeuvre and easy to park. And Renault has taken the idea a step further with the Scenic, designed to seat five adults in the sort of comfort and style that a traditional saloon or estate cannot match.

But the Japanese have taken downsizing to, perhaps, extremes with both Daihatsu and Suzuki announcing micro-MPVs, bizarre-looking boxes on wheels that seat five or six in a vehicle the length of a Metro or Fiesta. Suzuki's Wagon R+ is developed from the Japanese Wagon R. It looks very similar to Daihatsu's Move, although demand are immutable. In the year following the Galaxy launch, Ford alone registered more MPVs than all the other manufacturers put together had in the previous 12 months. At the same time, a whole host of other manufacturers launched their own all-new MPVs.

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	OTR List Price (£)	Depreciation (£)	Fuel Cost (£)	Finance Cost (£)	SMR Cost (£)	Insurance Cost (£)	Total Cost (£)	PPM
Fiesta 1.3i Encore 3 dr	8,440	4,070	4,120	1,760	1,220	900	12,070	20.1
Corsa 1.2i Merit 3 dr	8,195	4,100	4,052	1,710	1,335	855	12,052	20.1
Renault Clio 1.2 RL 3 dr	8,240	4,560	3,817	1,735	1,335	855	12,302	20.5
Citroen Saxo 1.1i SX 3 dr	8,765	4,680	3,717	1,874	1,330	1,065	12,666	21.1
VW Polo 1.0L 3 dr	7,990	4,490	3,570	1,798	1,285	900	12,043	20.1
Fiesta 1.25i LX 16V 5 dr	10,395	5,120	4,120	2,165	1,115	1,065	13,585	22.6
Corsa 1.4i LS 5 dr	9,890	5,050	4,476	2,059	1,375	900	13,860	23.1
Citroen Saxo 1.4i SX 5 dr	9,810	5,220	4,052	2,097	1,420	1,245	14,034	23.4
VW Polo 1.4 CL 5 dr	10,520	6,370	3,886	2,367	1,425	1,065	15,113	25.2
Peugeot 106 XR 1.4 5 dr	10,915	6,050	4,062	2,295	1,475	1,335	15,217	25.4
Fiesta 1.8D LX 5 dr	10,665	5,570	3,810	2,221	1,410	1,065	14,076	23.5
Renault Clio 1.9D Club Med	10,320	5,620	3,868	2,232	1,560	1,065	14,345	23.9
Peugeot 106 XRD 1.5 5 dr	10,915	6,100	3,010	2,295	1,515	1,245	14,165	23.6
VW Polo 1.9D CL 5 dr	10,795	6,350	3,585	2,430	1,605	1,065	15,035	25.1
Citroen Saxo 1.5D VSX 5 dr	10,485	5,560	3,310	2,241	1,565	1,245	13,921	23.2
Fiesta 1.4i Si 16V 3 dr	11,385	5,930	4,476	2,369	1,185	1,335	15,295	25.5
Corsa 1.4i Sport 16V 3 dr	11,465	6,050	4,476	2,385	1,435	1,245	15,591	26.0
VW Polo 1.4 16V 3 dr	12,265	7,520	4,201	2,761	1,620	1,650	17,752	29.6
Fiat Punto 1.6 Sporting 3 dr	10,671	5,690	4,886	2,282	1,635	1,335	15,828	26.4
Fiesta 1.25i Ghia 16V 5 dr	11,705	6,020	4,120	2,435	1,115	1,245	14,935	24.9
Corsa 1.4i GLS 16V 5 dr	11,645	6,270	4,476	2,423	1,400	1,245	15,814	26.4
Renault Clio 1.4i RT 5 dr	11,215	6,510	4,296	2,421	1,405	1,065	15,697	26.2
VW Polo 1.6 GL 5 dr	11,755	7,210	4,737	2,646	1,565	1,335	17,493	29.2
Fiesta 1.4i Ghia X 16V 5 dr	12,955	6,780	4,476	2,696	1,175	1,335	16,462	27.4
Corsa 1.4i CDX 16V 5 dr	12,720	6,810	4,536	2,646	1,400	1,245	16,637	27.7
Renault Clio 1.8 RSi 3 dr	12,840	6,850	4,971	2,723	1,705	1,800	18,049	30.1
VW Polo 1.4 16V 5 dr	12,730	7,780	4,201	2,864	1,620	1,650	18,115	30.2

3 years, 60,000 Miles

OTR LIST PRICE is the recommended list price with delivery and road tax. DEPRECIATION is the difference between the projected value and invoice cost after allowing for any dealer/fleet discount. FUEL costs worked out using £2.85/gallon for unleaded and £2.94/gallon for diesel, together with the EC 93/116 combined fuel consumption figure (where available); otherwise a weighted average of the old figures is used. FINANCE a notional flat interest charge of 22.5% over 3 years, applied to the invoice price. SMR likely cost of routine servicing, tyre replacements, brake pads/linings, VAT, RAC or equivalent cover, and renewal of road tax. INSURANCE likely cost of 3 years premiums using ABI Groupings. TOTAL and PPM total cost over 3 years and cost per mile in pence.

Source: Emmerson Hill Associates



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Challenge to the company favourites

Russell Hayes

The heartland of fleet car sales belongs to two cars and two manufacturers. The Ford Mondeo and Vauxhall Vectra are sitting pretty, but if allowed a choice the company car driver isn't starved of alternatives. The most recent challenge has been quite unexpected. The Volkswagen Passat had hitherto passed the fleet market by but the latest model, on sale since March, is creating a lot of excitement. For a start it's good looking: the rounded roof lines the new Beetle concept car and imparts plenty of headroom. Initial quality seems Mercedes-like and VW basks in the reflected glory of Audi as the Passat shares the floorpan of the A4. By taking a sharp knife to the options list, Volkswagen no longer charges a premium for a well-equipped car. Prices start at £13,995 on the road for the 1.6E but even with 100bhp many drivers will find this engine too weedy.

The fleet favourite is destined to be the £15,110 1.8S. That's if people can get hold of it. The Passat has been beset by production hold-ups while Germany fine-tuned right-hand drive build quality. Delivery times are still over two months. The Peugeot 406, which is getting into its first full year of sales, is great in drive, elegantly styled and roomier than most. Its turbo diesel is still class-leading and the new V6 a treat. An estate variant and the fabulous new 406 coupé can only boost sales but the sales rush hasn't happened yet. Peter Jacob is operations development manager of GE Capital Fleet Services. His company sources 72,000 cars a year but he is surprised not to see the 406 higher up his list for 1996. "We don't penalise it in terms of running costs against its peer group and the people who run them here like them. The public marketing seems to be very good but there seems to be a hangover problem with fleets. Fleet marketing has to be amazingly perceptive and proactive." It reinforces the conservatism of a market which Nissan has also been trying to upset with the new Primera. The car really is very good to drive and well screwed together but burdened with an exterior so bland it says nothing at all. "We can put people in a Nissan or a Honda or whatever and it's very rare to get adverse feedback, but in the end they go back to the bog-standard fleet cars," says Jacob. Tom Stephenson, general manager of Leasecontract, agrees. His 13,000-strong fleet goes mostly to city firms and financial services. "The Nissan Primera GT is getting some enquiries," he says, "but there is still a snob value there. Ford gives comfort and a well-known name. Some drivers are more comfortable with saying they drive a Mondeo or Vectra." Of course some have their hands tied on choice. Fleet managers can appear to offer a wide choice of types of car with

the economics of one brand by going for the big names. Vauxhall and Ford are branching into every niche market they can think of. The same can be said of Toyota, but there are still companies with anti-Japanese car policies. This is irrational, not only because the likes of Toyota, Honda and Nissan are better value and faultlessly reliable, but because the Corolla, Accord and Primera are British-built. Brand new from Japan comes the Mitsubishi Galant: distinctive looking for the first time. It used to be a private buyer's favourite because imports were restricted but in 2000 the gentleman's agreement (a polite name for trade restriction) limiting Japanese imports to the UK ends, so UK importer Colt UK is looking at fleet sales. The Galant comes as a saloon or estate with 2.0- or 2.5-litre petrol power but no diesel. Starting from £17,210 on road, it nudges the prestige sector but Mitsubishi is claiming "whole life" costs are among the best in class – a claim supported by several leasing companies. The baby brother of the Galant, the unapologetically named Carisma, is quoted as free, as it is built in Holland, and did good business last year. Starting from £11,890, it is good value. Its sister cars, the Volvo S40 and V40 saloon and estate, have been pitched into BMW price territory but at £14,670, 1.6 S40 saloon is new £14,670, 1.6 S40 saloon is new £14,670. The Korean Hyundai Lantro, a minivan in the company car pond but worth a look. The smartly styled saloon lacks interior space but has just had the 137bhp, 2.0-litre engine from the coupé put under its bonnet. At £13,499 the 2.0 GSi saloon is undercut by the Mondeo 2.0 LX, but more than £1,000. So what of the old favourites? The Ford Mondeo was last year's best-selling fleet car and continues so far this year. A thorough revamp last year gave it a more aggressive front and rear end, safety was improved and its already impressive ride and handling tweaked. "It offers a rational and an emotional choice," says Nick Themistoclous, fleet marketing manager at Hertz. "It has good security, comfort and practicality but it has good looks and road presence." Meanwhile over at Vauxhall the Vectra has also received a few handling tweaks to counter criticisms of a stodgy ride even though it was only launched in 1995. An estate joined the line last autumn but Vauxhall has played the trump card on equipment, adding the Trafficmaster, a navigation system to most Vectra models. This gives an audible warning of motorway jams several minutes before you hit them and is proving a big hit with drivers. Vauxhall has also recently launched the Philia Carin in-car navigation system on the Vectra and Omega. For the autumn, in-car navigation looks set to be the 1996 wide of the sunroof was to the 1994 only a lot more useful.

fleet & executive cars

Subaru thrives on rally pedigree

Martin Derrick

Colin McRae, who won the 1996 World Rally Championship in his Subaru Impreza, is not the only fan of the Japanese marque. Its British customers also recently showed their enthusiasm for one of Japan's smaller car makers by voting it up to the very top of this year's JD Power Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The survey put Subaru first of the 33 car makers surveyed, edging Honda and Kia into joint second place, with Daewoo fourth and Skoda best-placed European car maker in fifth.

According to Dave Sargent, director of European operations for JD Power and Associates: "Subaru owners report fewer problems than any others when they first take delivery of their vehicle. Dealers are excellent at resolving problems which do occur and they treat their customers well when they come in for service or repair. Subaru wins thanks to outstanding quality and excellent dealer service."

In the survey, Subaru scored consistently high marks throughout all the major criteria, such as customer care, warranty work and vehicle performance. And it earned the highest score among all manufacturers for "problem incidence and resolution".

Ed Swaiman, managing director of Subaru (UK), commented: "We are delighted that Subaru and its dealers have been officially and independently recognised for giving customers what they value most."

"This award is as much a commendation for the Subaru technician who services the car as it is for the dealer principal

who sets out his customer care guidelines. It also proves that reliable cars need not be dull. Just ask any Impreza Turbo owner."

Finding an Impreza Turbo owner to ask may be a problem, however. Subaru, despite having been imported into the UK for 20 years by International Motors Group - which also imports Isuzu and SsangYong - still sold only around 5,600 cars last year despite boosting sales by 25 per cent. This year its target is 8,000 and it hopes to reach 10,000 by the year 2000.

Subaru is one of a number of Japanese makes which for years has been severely restricted in the number of cars it could sell in Britain because of the iniquitous quota system.

But despite only being able to import a small number of cars, Subaru carved itself an early niche in rugged and reliable four-wheel drive vehicles. These 1980s Justy hatchbacks and Legacy Estates may have lacked the style and poise of an Audi Quattro or Range Rover - the main 4x4 competitors - but the Subarus were inexpensive and, above all, thrived on hard work, often in poor conditions. Subaru earned for itself a loyal following among farmers, vets and rural doctors, for whom mobility and reliability ranked higher than image and street cred.

In recent years, however, Subaru has broadened its range to attract a wider following. Its UK line-up now starts with the Hungarian-built 1.3-litre Justy, still the only 4x4 supermini on the market. The largest seller is the mid-range Impreza, recently facelifted and given a power boost. All have full-time four-wheel drive and 2.0-litre engines, with the flagship Turbo



Customers' favourite: Subarus like the Impreza Turbo are top of the list for satisfying buyers

2000 boasting 208bhp - enough for a top speed of 143mph and acceleration from 0 to 62mph in a blistering 6.4 seconds. This is the road-going version of the car in which Subaru won the World Rally Championship the last two years, and so popular is it that waiting lists now extend to August.

At the top of the Subaru line-up comes the Legacy range of executive saloons and estates - again, all with four-wheel drive.

Most interesting is the Legacy Outback Estate, described as the world's first sport utility estate, a sort of cross between a conventional estate car and an out-and-out off-road vehicle. Essentially, it's a standard Legacy Estate but with raised and beefed-up suspension. Though in the USA 60 per cent of all Subaru sales are now Outback Estates, Swaiman is rather more modest in his estimates of potential UK demand:

"We expect to sell several hundred this year, but we are now entering uncharted territory and as such could spark off a whole new market. This is a great opportunity for us."

He is also confident that Subaru's recent rally successes can only augur well for the future. "It has proven an excellent technological showcase for Subaru. Not only has it allowed us to demonstrate the reliability and durability of our all-wheel

drive system but it has graphically highlighted the active safety benefits of AWD. All in all, the World Rally Championship has done wonders for the marque."

But one thing will not change, he promises. Subaru will continue to sell through small family dealerships where customers will still enjoy a level of personal service that larger volume franchises simply cannot offer.

Survey may not reveal the true picture

The JD Power Survey has some important messages for motor manufacturers but it is by no means the last word in reliability itself, writes Martin Derrick. Its massively influential counterpart, JD Power Survey in the USA, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, is based on far more raw data and so can quantify initial quality, car appeal, used car quality and customer satisfaction.

The British survey, by contrast, is neither random nor disinterested in that it relies purely on responses from readers and viewers of BBC's *Top Gear*. Thus, while JD Power can poll every new car buyer in the USA, in Britain it can only poll those who contact the organisation - under 17,000 this year - and this could result in an over-emphasis on people who may have experienced problems with their cars (in other words, whingers) and the sort of people who fill in forms in magazines. In this respect, JD Power in the UK operates in a similar fashion to the Consumers Association - an organisation that has incurred the wrath of the motor industry for drawing conclusions from unrepresentative and usually absurdly small (i.e. statistically insignificant) samples.

Although JD Power attempts to study a number of aspects of customer satisfaction, by far the most accurate survey of car reliability published to date comes from Lex Vehicle Leasing,

Britain's largest contract hire company with over 70,000 cars on its books. It found that the most reliable cars come from Mitsubishi, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Honda and Fiat in that order. Bottom of the pile came Rover, Vauxhall, Citroën, Saab and Ford.

The value of its survey, in comparison to any other, is that it is based on actual experience, documented over (usually) three or four years and with an average of 60,000 miles per car.

But the organisations with the most information of all - the AA and the RAC, each with millions of members - both refuse to release any data. When pressed, they argue that their job is to get cars going at the roadside and that statistics would be tainted by breakdowns that were the driver's fault rather than the manufacturer's. Poor maintenance, battery problems and even running out of fuel could all adversely reflect on the make of car.

However, incidents such as these could easily be filtered from statistics. The truth is that most manufacturers now offer a year's free membership of the AA or RAC to new car buyers. That represents an enormous amount of business for the breakdown companies who are not about to jeopardise their incomes for the sake of letting the customer view the true picture...

The new Volvo C70's appearance on the silver screen heralds a revival in the fortunes of glamorous models, writes Russell Hayes

Coupé set for a superhero's comeback

When a car maker says never again it means nothing of the sort. There is no concept that cannot be revived and this summer sees a resurgence in glamorous coupés from some humdrum names.

The last swoopy Volvo was Roger Moore's P1800 in *The Saint*. Now said superhero has returned in the shape of Val Kilmer, driving the new Volvo C70, which has had far better reviews than the film. Driven by a 2.3-litre, five-cylinder turbo engine, it crowns the company's turnaround from housebrick shapes. At around £35,000 when it goes on sale in September, the C70 will be unattainable for most, especially as only 20 will be imported this year (and about 50 have already been sold purely on the strength of press reports). However, a less gadget-laden sub-£30,000 car is on the cards.

Volvo is aiming straight at BMW and Mercedes but neither will be caught napping. BMW's 3-Series Coupé continues as the No 1 best seller despite its conservative lines and Mercedes continues to surprise with the CLK, a four-seater, 3.2-litre, V6 coupé on sale in June. Its radical four-head-amp style - borrowed from the E-Class - is miles away from the sedate E-Class coupé it replaces. Based on the C-Class, the CLK is slightly smaller than the Volvo C70 but stuffed with technology

and cheaper at £25,000 to £35,000.

One price-rung down but possibly the best-looking of the lot is Peugeot's new 406 Coupé. It is blessed with a shape from Italian stylist Pininfarina, which also pens Ferraris. Peugeot UK has announced prices if you'd care to place orders, but there are no demonstrator cars available yet. Choose from the 2.0-litre, 135bhp, four-cylinder or the new, super-smooth 194bhp, 3.0-litre, V6. Prices start at £20,120 and stop at £26,420, ready for the road.

Chris Birch, purchasing manager of leasing company PPH Vehicle Management Services, reckons the 406 is ready to take on the mantle of the much-loved Vauxhall Calibra, which ceases production this summer. He only bought 400 coupés out of 22,000 cars last year but 250 were Calibras. Some company drivers like coupés just for posing, he says, but some buy them for safety reasons. "If you've got a young executive with kids they can't get out of the back of a coupé. There are no locks or doors to play with."

Coupés are all about looks and short shelf-lives. But if the European designers have rediscovered form, the Japanese are generally held to have got the wind up. The last Honda Prelude had some intriguing curve lines but the new car

reverts to a rather boxy look. However, the benefits are more room for rear passengers and a bigger boot. Technology is still advanced, with Honda's V-Tec engine that loves to be revved. On-road prices are £18,795 for the 2.0i and £22,295 for the 2.2 VTI.

The only drivers who are not bowled over by the latest 20-valve hubbly-eyed Fiat Coupé are those who bought the equally beautiful 1995 four-cylinder, two-litre car. Last year Fiat ditched that engine for a magnificent, burbling five-cylinder without or with turbo at £19,345 and £21,720 respectively on the road. It drips Italian style, with a strip of body-coloured metal running across the dash and brushed chrome petrol cap. If looks are open to debate, most drivers' hearts are melted by the Alfa Romeo GTV Coupé, a stunner with room for two plus toothbrush and Armani dinner jacket, £21,351 on the road.

The choice is still pretty exciting below £20,000, where coupés are taking over from hot hatchbacks as style statements. However, before you cast aside your worthy rep-moblie check whether your company will tolerate a two-door car. Plenty still put them on the banned list for insurance or image reasons. Running costs can also be high because fashion-led, mass-market coupés have frightening



Smooth operator: only 200 Volvo C70s, the model which features in 'The Saint', will be imported this year. The car goes on sale in September

depreciation. In the latest company car policy survey by remuneration advisers Monks Partnership, 70 per cent of large companies wouldn't have cabrios or two-door cars.

The sample was 165 big names like Argos and Midland Bank. "It used to be four-door saloons only, so that you could take clients around without them having to clamber into the back seat," says consultant

David Atkins. "But times are moving on, with people driving around on their own. However, image is still crucial. A two-door is fine at the senior end of the advertising industry but not in heavy engineering."

No coupé is a beast of burden but some are more versatile than others. Over a three-year contract you may well get very hacked off with a boot opening the size of a letter-box and

how will it fare on long-distance holidays? Most coupés have conventional and oddly shaped boots even though the rear seats may fold.

Enter the Hyundai Coupé, with hatchback and a lot to recommend it. Where Japan has lost its nerve this curvy Korean upstart has a full order book. At £15,599 and £16,999 all in, the two-litre pair offer sound quality, good looks and bags of

equipment. The only snag is a small dealer network.

The 1.6-litre Renault Megane Coupé starts at a reasonable £12,640 on the road and Vauxhall's smaller but more dramatic Tigra is £12,495 delivered. The success of both has prompted Ford into this market for the first time with the Fiesta-based 1.7-litre Puma. Unveiled earlier this year, but on sale in July at around

£15,000, it should be a great drive. "It's a well-engineered car, not simply a styling exercise," said a spokesman, having a swipe at the Tigra, which is based on the less agile Corsa.

But even Ford can get it wrong in the fickle coupé market. The untold Probe goes out of production in June after only three years but the rumoured replacement, the Cougar, is said to more than make up for it.

The classless Ford is a chic choice

John Blauth

The Ford Ka - pronounce it how you will, insiders favour Kay-A - is Ford's response to those who feel that, as a maker, it knows nothing of chic, of ideal design or of leading-edge automotive fashion.

Sales of the round-rumped car currently stand at around 700 per month and are rising as more and more buyers come to appreciate the cheeky style and the first-class dynamics.

The Ka is based on its Fiesta sibling but offers more interior room in a smaller package. Its engine is a sprightly 1.3-litre and fuel economy hovers around 45mpg in a mixture of town and country driving. Inside there is easily room for two big lads (or four medium to small

ones) and the boot is ideal for the sort of urban trips the car excels at. The moulded composite fascia is startling and brilliantly designed.

Ka represents something truly new in the market: a car without pretensions, that is classless. It is the first of a new genre which will soon include the Mercedes/Smart car and the BMW/Rover-inspired new Mini.

Ford's initial plans were to sell 200,000 per year in continental Europe and 30,000 in Britain. In its first year the Ka will fall short of its targets, hit by the same public resistance that the Sierra suffered after it was first launched.

At prices that start below £8,000 though, the Ka is unlikely to languish long in the doldrums.



Fashion statement: the Ka is set to confound the sceptics

We can't get enough of Audi

Martin Derrick

Audi in Britain has a problem. Over the past three years its sales have increased by over 33 per cent with the result that the UK is now the German marque's largest export market bar none. Demand is so great that customers ordering the Golf-sized (and new Golf-based) Audi A3, introduced in October last year, are being told by dealers that they will have to wait until September for delivery.

And now Audi has launched the all-new A6 series to compete directly with the BMW 5-Series and Mercedes-Benz E-class - and all the indications are that this will boost demand for the brand even further.

In one sense, this excess of demand over supply is the sort of problem that many motor

industry executives would give their right arms to have to put up with. But Len Hunt, Audi UK's managing director, is genuinely concerned that customers might be asked to wait too long. He is constantly badgering Audi in Germany to allocate more cars to the UK - but he knows that many of his counterparts in other markets where Audi is also doing well are sending exactly the same pleas to the factory at Ingolstadt.

What does not surprise him is that Audi is now the fastest-growing prestige marque in Britain. The brand got a huge boost, of course, when Princess Diana chose an Audi Cabriolet as her everyday transport. It has enjoyed a further boost from the new product ranges that have been launched in the recent past - from the all-aluminium, hi-tech A8, through the revised

A4 range, the new, smaller hatchback A3 range, and now the executive segment car, the A6.

"We laid down a five-year strategy three years ago to become a major player in the prestige car market with no less than 2 per cent of the total UK market," said Mr Hunt. "Last year we registered over 30,000 units, a record which took our market share to 1.5 per cent. This is a testament to the growing strength of the brand."

But the strategy is not purely performance-based. It also incorporates our continued development as a brand as a whole - as a prestige marque, rather than another range of cars sold by Volkswagen dealers."

Separate Audi Centres are now being developed. "The whole concept is to deliver a

unique experience. One which is enjoyable, hassle-free and mirrors the quality of our product," said Mr Hunt.

In addition, the brand is being repositioned to boost the appeal and desirability of Audi cars. In the near future, Audi plans to launch new sports and high-performance models to keep on building the excitement of the brand.

For now, the A6 is expected to account for around 7,500 sales a year once the Avant estate model joins the saloon early next year. That's fewer than BMW's 11,000 5-Series sales last year and Mercedes-Benz's 13,500 E-Class sales. But it's enough to make Audi Germany's third major player in the executive car market, which will make life interesting for Jaguar when it launches its mid-size car into the market next year.

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£26.70. L210. L250. L280. L300. L350. L380. L400. L450. L500. L550. L600. L650. L700. L750. L800. L850. L900. L950. L1000. L1050. L1100. L1150. L1200. L1250. L1300. L1350. L1400. L1450. L1500. L1550. L1600. L1650. L1700. L1750. L1800. L1850. L1900. L1950. L2000. L2050. L2100. L2150. L2200. L2250. L2300. L2350. L2400. L2450. L2500. L2550. L2600. L2650. L2700. L2750. L2800. L2850. L2900. L2950. L3000. L3050. L3100. L3150. L3200. L3250. L3300. L3350. L3400. L3450. L3500. L3550. L3600. L3650. L3700. L3750. L3800. L3850. L3900. L3950. L4000. L4050. L4100. L4150. L4200. L4250. L4300. L4350. L4400. L4450. L4500. L4550. L4600. L4650. L4700. L4750. L4800. L4850. L4900. L4950. L5000. L5050. L5100. L5150. L5200. L5250. L5300. L5350. L5400. L5450. L5500. L5550. L5600. L5650. L5700. L5750. L5800. L5850. L5900. L5950. L6000. L6050. L6100. L6150. L6200. L6250. L6300. L6350. L6400. L6450. L6500. L6550. L6600. L6650. L6700. L6750. L6800. L6850. L6900. L6950. L7000. L7050. L7100. L7150. L7200. L7250. L7300. L7350. L7400. L7450. L7500. L7550. L7600. L7650. L7700. L7750. L7800. L7850. L7900. L7950. L8000. L8050. L8100. L8150. L8200. L8250. L8300. L8350. L8400. L8450. L8500. L8550. L8600. L8650. L8700. L8750. L8800. L8850. L8900. L8950. L9000. L9050. L9100. L9150. L9200. L9250. L9300. L9350. L9400. L9450. L9500. L9550. L9600. L9650. L9700. L9750. L9800. L9850. L9900. L9950. L10000. L10050. L10100. L10150. L10200. L10250. L10300. L10350. L10400. L10450. L10500. L10550. L10600. L10650. L10700. L10750. L10800. L10850. L10900. L10950. L11000. L11050. L11100. L11150. L11200. L11250. L11300. L11350. L11400. L11450. L11500. L11550. L11600. L11650. L11700. L11750. L11800. L11850. L11900. L11950. L12000. L12050. L12100. L12150. L12200. L12250. L12300. L12350. L12400. L12450. L12500. L12550. L12600. L12650. L12700. L12750. L12800. L12850. L12900. L12950. L13000. L13050. L13100. L13150. L13200. L13250. L13300. L13350. L13400. L13450. L13500. L13550. L13600. L13650. L13700. L13750. L13800. L13850. L13900. L13950. L14000. L14050. L14100. L14150. L14200. L14250. L14300. L14350. L14400. L14450. L14500. L14550. L14600. L14650. L14700. L14750. L14800. L14850. L14900. L14950. L15000. L15050. L15100. L15150. L15200. L15250. L15300. L15350. L15400. L15450. L15500. L15550. L15600. L15650. L15700. L15750. L15800. L15850. L15900. L15950. L16000. L16050. L16100. L16150. L16200. L16250. L16300. L16350. L16400. L16450. L16500. L16550. L16600. L16650. L16700. L16750. L16800. L16850. L16900. L16950. L17000. L17050. L17100. L17150. L17200. L17250. L17300. L17350. L17400. L17450. L17500. L17550. L17600. L17650. L17700. L17750. L17800. L17850. L17900. L17950. L18000. L18050. L18100. L18150. L18200. L18250. L18300. L18350. L18400. L18450. L18500. L18550. L18600. L18650. L18700. L18750. L18800. L18850. L18900. L18950. L19000. L19050. L19100. L19150. L19200. L19250. L19300. L19350. L19400. L19450. L19500. L19550. L19600. L19650. L19700. L19750. L19800. L19850. L19900. L19950. L20000. L20050. L20100. L20150. L20200. L20250. L20300. L20350. L20400. L20450. L20500. L20550. L20600. L20650. L20700. L20750. L20800. L20850. L20900. L20950. L21000. L21050. L21100. L21150. L21200. L21250. L21300. L21350. L21400. L21450. L21500. L21550. L21600. L21650. L21700. L21750. L21800. L21850. L21900. L21950. L22000. L22050. L22100. L22150. L22200. L22250. L22300. L22350. L22400. L22450. L22500. L22550. L22600. L22650. L22700. L22750. L22800. L22850. L22900. L22950. L23000. L23050. L23100. L23150. L23200. L23250. L23300. L23350. L23400. L23450. L23500. L23550. L23600. L23650. L23700. L23750. L23800. L23850. L23900. L23950. L24000. L24050. L24100. L24150. L24200. L24250. L24300. L24350. L24400. L24450. L24500. L24550. L24600. L24650. L24700. L24750. L24800. L24850. L24900. L24950. L25000. L25050. L25100. L25150. L25200. L25250. L25300. L25350. L25400. L25450. L25500. L25550. L25600. L25650. L25700. L25750. L25800. L25850. L25900. L25950. L26000. L26050. L26100. L26150. L26200. L26250. L26300. L26350. L26400. L26450. L26500. L26550. L26600. L26650. L26700. L26750. L26800. L26850. L26900. L26950. L27000. L27050. L27100. L27150. L27200. L27250. L27300. L27350. L27400. L27450. L27500. L27550. L27600. L27650. L27700. L27750. L27800. L27850. L27900. L27950. L28000. L28050. L28100. L28150. L28200. L28250. L28300. L28350. L28400. L28450. L28500. L28550. L28600. L28650. L28700. L28750. L28800. L28850. L28900. L28950. L29000. L29050. L29100. L29150. L29200. L29250. L29300. L29350. L29400. L29450. L29500. L29550. L29600. L29650. L29700. L29750. L29800. L29850. L29900. L29950. L30000. L30050. L30100. L30150. L30200. L30250. L30300. L30350. L30400. L30450. L30500. L30550. L30600. L30650. L30700. L30750. L30

Ascot - 600				
Horse	C	B	L	7
Bayesian	2-1	5-2	5-2	8-9
Big Mutt	9-2	4-1	9-2	5-1
Time Won't Wait	4-1	13-2	7-2	5-1
Storm Alert	7-1	11-2	8-1	6-1
Thumping In	7-1	6-1	7-1	6-1
Midster Dobby	7-1	13-2	8-1	9-1
Comedian Challenge	10-1	10-1	9-1	8-1
Society Brawl	20-1	20-1	20-1	20-1

Each-way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3
G - Good, R - Worst HLT - Lockheart, 7 - Top

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Frentzen's driving force
Derick Allsop on the German's
maiden grand prix win, page 30

sport

Gallacher galore
Phil Shaw meets Scotland's
Mr Indestructible, page 30

Neville dispels Mancunian myth

GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent

According to football legend, international weeks are preceded by an ancient Mancunian ritual. It supposedly involves the manager, these days Alex Ferguson, calling his international players into his office and gently reminding them about that hamstring pull or groin strain they had forgotten to mention when their country called.

The Welsh and Irish public who rarely see Ryan Giggs and Roy Keane in friendly may not be convinced but, said Gary Neville yesterday, this scenario is a myth.

Neville was at Bisham Abbey yesterday for an England training session, as he has been every time either Glenn Hoddle or Terry Venables have picked him. He was even there for England's last match, the friendly with Mexico, despite Hoddle and Ferguson agreeing that he had no chance of playing.

Neville, who is expected to win his 17th cap in England's World Cup tie against Georgia at Wembley tomorrow, said: "I've never even had a conversation with the manager about it. If I am selected, I just go. He wants us to play for England - the experience we can pick up stands us in good stead for United."

Some might suggest that Neville is less important to United than Giggs or Keane, but they would be confusing his lower profile with ability. Neville's maturity and dependable versatility mark him out as a future England captain and valuable current player.

Hoddle, who allowed the injured goalkeeper Ian Walker to return to Tottenham yesterday, said: "Gary is very mature and accomplished at a very young age. He has played in the European Championships and in big European matches for Manchester United and taken it all in his stride."

"He's doing it in the big games - as the skill he showed setting up United's third goal at Liverpool illustrated. If that had been Cantona, Zola or



Double act: Paul Ince and Robbie Fowler (left) turn their backs on the ebullient Jamie Redknapp and Steve McManaman at Bisham Abbey yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Juninho, then it would have been analysed over and over." Neville regards himself as less proficient going forward than his brother, Phil, but he has performed just as well for England at wing-back as he has at full-back and also as part of a back three.

Where he plays tomorrow night is uncertain. Hoddle admitted that in switching to a back four half-way through the Mexico game he was mistaken in putting all his faith in the German model of three central

defenders and wing-backs. Flexibility is required. "I played in three different positions in Euro 96," Neville said. "With players who can adapt, it does not matter what the system is."

The *Tournoi de France* in June will be a chance for Hoddle to experiment and Neville pledged that, if selected, he would be there despite suggestions that United want to rest their players. "We're playing Brazil, Italy and France. I might never get the chance to play

Brazil again - it is not the sort of thing you turn down. "I don't feel tired. Given the right fitness advice, as we get at United, you should always be in good shape to play. At 22 you just play, you don't think about it. We trust the manager to look after us, he will rest us if he thinks we are tired."

Neville also intimated that, whatever Ferguson decides to do about Eric Cantona, he will trust his judgement. Cantona has been heavily criticised in the wake of the European Cup

defeat by Borussia Dortmund, but Neville said he could not imagine him leaving. But he added, however, that if he did depart, United would continue to prosper.

"Speaking for the young players, it would not cross our minds to think Eric will leave. He's the captain, other teams fear him. In every game you know the opposition manager has been telling his players how to combat him and other United players get freedom because of that. He is so influential. He has such

presence, very few players in the Premiership inspire the same feelings in opponents. "I can't imagine him in a different shirt, as a fan or a teammate, but two or three years ago I could not imagine Paul Ince, Mark Hughes and Andrei Kanchelskis not wearing a United shirt. Since they have left we have progressed further in Europe, woo the double and, I hope, a second title."

Ferguson will be at Wembley to watch Neville, David Beckham, and possibly, Gary Pallister, Phil Neville and Nicky Butt playing. Butt sat out training yesterday morning, as did Les Ferdinand, as a precaution after suffering minor niggles. They should be fit to play if required, as will Stuart Pearce, who fully extended his calf muscle injury for the first time.

With only Walker missing from the original 25-man party, England are, said Hoddle, "in the strongest position since I've been manager". No excuses, then, not that there should be any need for them.

At Bristol, British Universities went down by 122 runs against Gloucestershire, whose spinner Martyn Ball took 4 for 22. The Tasmanian Shaun Young hit 52 at a run a ball for the Gold Award, while for the students Robin Martin-Jenkins finished with 4 for 57 and wicketkeeper Tim Bailey made 52.

At Trent Bridge Durham are within sight of their first win over a first-class side since 28 July last year thanks to David Boon's third half-century in four innings. When rain stopped play Nottinghamshire were 94 for 3 from 26 overs, needing 232 to win.

Only 10.5 overs were possible in the Roses match at Old Trafford, with Yorkshire 43 without loss, and at Lakenham Chris Adams was unbeaten on 95 as Derbyshire reached 166 for 2 chasing the Minor Counties' 257. The former Derbyshire player Mark Fell made 67 and Richard Dalton 76 off 59 balls. Reports, scoreboard, page 31

Dalglisch tempts Tomasson to Tyneside

ALAN NIXON

Kenny Dalglisch has made Jon Dahl Tomasson his third major signing for Newcastle United in a £2.5m move that will take the Dane from the Dutch Cup finalists, Heerenveen, to Tyneside in the summer.

The attacking midfielder is one of the top scorers in the Netherlands this season, and even before his arrival at Newcastle he is being touted as a long-term replacement for Peter Beardsley. Tomasson is signing a deal worth an estimated

£30,000 a week, making him the highest of Dalglisch's three signings so far at Bradford City's Des Hamilton and the Georgian, Temur Ketsbaia.

Blackburn, Dalglisch's previous club, were also endeavouring to strengthen their squad yesterday by making a £2m bid for the French international right-back Patrick Blondeau.

The Rovers chairman, Robert Coar, tabled an offer at the weekend to Monaco for the defender after Roy Hodgson, who will move to Ewood Park in the summer, told him to make the approach. Blondeau impressed

Hodgson in the two games against his Internazionale side in the UEFA Cup semi-final. Blackburn are competing with both Sheffield Wednesday and Rangers for the Frenchman's signature.

The Football League has refused a request from the satellite broadcaster, Sky Sports, to switch Hereford United's crucial Third Division survival match with Brighton at Edgar Street from Saturday to Sunday in order to screen the game live.

Chris Hull, a League spokesman, said: "Sky asked the League to move the game forward to Sunday but, after consulting both clubs and the local police, we felt the game should remain on Saturday."

The Torquay United chairman Mike Bateson said he is disillusioned with the "apathy and antipathy" in professional football and intends standing down at the end of the season. Bateson has been in charge at Plainmoor for seven seasons, investing £1.3m in the Third Division club.

Bateson said: "After the trials and tribulations of the last few years, it is becoming increasingly difficult for me to conjure up the enthusiasm and optimism which is a prerequisite of running a football club. I have had my ups and downs but I'm increasingly tired of the apathy and antipathy in the professional game."

"I'd like to stress, however, that the people who have had a go at me over the years would not push me one inch towards resigning if I did not feel I've had enough." Bateson intends to sell his 82 per cent majority shareholding in the club. His wife, a fellow director, will also sell her shares.

Leeds United's chief executive quits, page 21

Orient boot out Shilton

Peter Shilton's League career appears to be over. His contract with Leyton Orient has been terminated because the former England goalkeeper, who is the only player with 1,000 League games under his belt, can no longer belt the ball far enough.

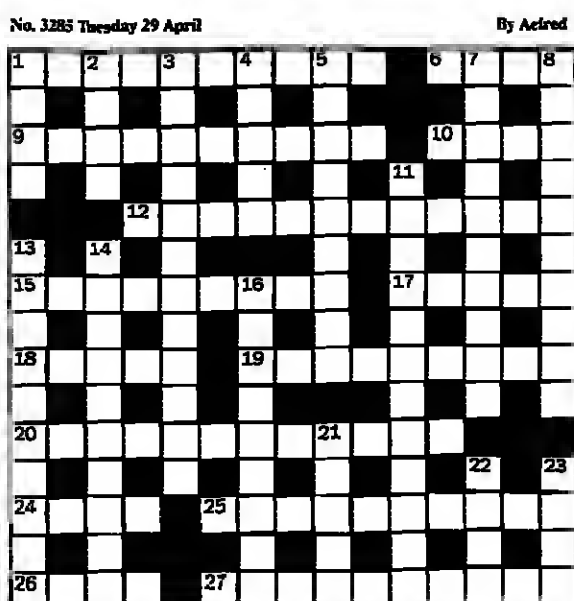
The 47-year-old played only 10 times for the Third Division side, including his landmark 1,000th, after joining them from West Ham last November.

Orient's manager, Tommy Taylor, said: "Peter is magnificent for his age and if he could kick the ball I would keep him. It sounds silly but you need a goalkeeper to kick it into your

opponent's penalty box to make chances in this division." Orient's chief scout, Steve Shorey, added: "I wouldn't like to say anything against a player who has served the game so well... other clubs might be interested in him."

He pointed out that Shilton, who is to play several games in Hong Kong, was Orient's first choice until he was injured and the club signed Paul Hyde, who has taken over the No 1 jersey.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Is inquisitive however the French feature in old house? (6,4)
 - 6 Catty report gives me audible expression of pain (4)
 - 9 In time for geologist to curse trips interrupted by expert (10)
 - 10 Mark holiday resort borough ignored (4)
 - 12 Might such lines be bound to meet without precedent? (12)
 - 15 Protected species? (9)
 - 17 One finding power in honey, and drive (5)
 - 18 English man said to have modern communication (1-4)
 - 19 Spells controlling awfully cosy organisation (4,5)
 - 20 Perhaps Bismarck's sad tone (8,4)
 - 24 Top dog's sound (4)
 - 25 House one with intelligence that's outrageous (10)
 - 26 Observe Germany's potential Wimbledon champion? (4)
 - 27 In check, given hesitation, was consumer obstinate? (10)
- DOWN**
- 1 Speed and power expert (4)
 - 2 Animal found in Gb. exceptionally (4)
 - 3 Rose window, say, detains awfully good girl (7,5)
 - 4 One with inclination to be observed in a laugh? (5)
 - 5 Return of a two-faced politician is praiseworthy? (9)
 - 7 Use clay put in order to represent tree (10)
 - 8 Best type of universal instruction (5-5)
 - 11 Comprehensive in culls designed to be limited to living (3-9)
 - 13 Taps were fitted to control one's pressure in these? (5,5)
 - 14 One's mate Calum surprisingly is not spotted (10)
 - 16 Sign proceeded to maintain one's bookish type (9)
 - 21 Live to deceive and give a false impression (5)
 - 22 Fuss over chemical (4)
 - 23 Rum bit of land in the main? (4)

Question of confidence for battling Parrott

Snooker

GUY HODGSON
reports from the Crucible, Sheffield

What happened next? John Parrott is more familiar as a permanent feature on *Question of Sport* these days, but while that normally suggests retirement has either been reached or is impending, he obviously plans something more vigorous.

Parrott, 36, reached his ninth quarter-final in 14 Embassy World Championships yesterday when he defeated Anthony Hamilton 13-11 and while that might not sound like a overwhelming margin, he began making comparisons with his 1991 title victory.

"No one is talking about me as a potential winner," he said, "and in that I'm in a similar position to when I won here. I had a poor season then and this year, although I got to the final of the European Open, my results have been mixed."

"I still haven't got my safety together. I find the tables very quick, but I believe I'm still a good match player. I'm very hard to beat." Did he feel good? "If I got any happier I'd be walking around looking like Bonnie Langford," he replied.

The smile on the fourth seed's face frequently looked strained, however, during a match which he described as "bizarre". He began by scoring only nine points in the first four frames and forfeited the 11th when he was called for three

successive misses when the cue ball rolled away from a red.

"Whoever put the spirit level on that table must be from the Marty Feldman school," he said. "There was no way the table was straight. I've never seen a roll like that before."

Away from these deviations from the straight and narrow, the quality of the snooker was often very high. Hamilton has reached the last 16 in ranking tournaments nine times and failed to get any further, yet he had three century breaks in this match and refused to let Parrott run away when the former champion appeared to be heading for a commanding lead.

At 11-11, Parrott found his best form, knocking in a 133 in the penultimate frame and then trapping Hamilton in a web of snookers in the last. "I've got a bit of experience on my side," he said. "I need something against these young lads."

In between his first- and second-round matches, Parrott filmed two *Question of Sport* programmes for the BBC but he does not see it as a distraction. "If anything it's a bonus," he said. "It's a good way to relax. I wouldn't let anything interfere with my snooker. It's foremost in my mind."

Snooker has always been high up in Steve Davis's list of priorities, but sometimes you cannot win no matter how you are playing. He used to inflict horrible defeats on opponents who did little wrong but could not cope with the weight of the scores he would post against

them. On Sunday night the bitter was well and truly bit, his worst world championship defeat since Tony Knowles beat him 10-11 15 years ago.

Davis was, by his own admission, annihilated 13-3 by Keo Doherty. "It was very therapeutic watching it all drift away," the six-times champion said. "It was an interesting experience to say the least." When you have been beaten a session early and by such a comprehensive margin, the pain of defeat is deadened to the point of jocularly.

"No matter what I did it wouldn't work," he continued. "I tried to take the foot off the pedal and still it made no difference. By the end, I adopted the 'couldn't care less' philosophy. At one stage I'm sure I was playing with the wrong cue, by the end I'm sure it was the wrong arm."

Doherty, by his own manager Ian Doyle's admission, is an under-achiever in snooker. He has won one ranking tournament, but so much more was expected when he made his debut at the Crucible in 1991 at the age of 21. Against Davis, he displayed what people had predicted six years ago: relentless potting.

Was that the best he had played recently, he was asked. "Never mind this season. I haven't played like that for a couple of seasons. Every time I got in I seemed to score heavily. Steve has given me a few beatings in the past and I was happy to return the favour." Results, Digest, page 31

Cronje puts Ireland in control

Crickets

ADAM SZRETER

The South African captain Hansie Cronje made an unbeaten 94 for Ireland, who had Middlesex in serious trouble when rain ended play early in their Benson and Hedges Cup zonal match in Dublin yesterday.

Middlesex were 134 for 6 off 32.2 overs, now needing to score at 8.38 per over in reply to 281 for 4 by Ireland, who last month narrowly missed out on a place in the next World Cup after finishing fourth in the ICC Trophy.

Leicestershire posted a record for the 50-over version of the cup as they eased to a 178-run victory over Scotland at Grace Road. They made 371 for 6 to beat Warwickshire's 369 for 8, made last season when the tournament switched from 55 overs.

Opener Darren Maddy made 97 off 98 balls, and there were half-centuries from Iain Sturcliffe, James Whitaker and Aftab Habib. Scotland were below full strength with eight of the squad which finished third in the ICC Trophy unavailable.

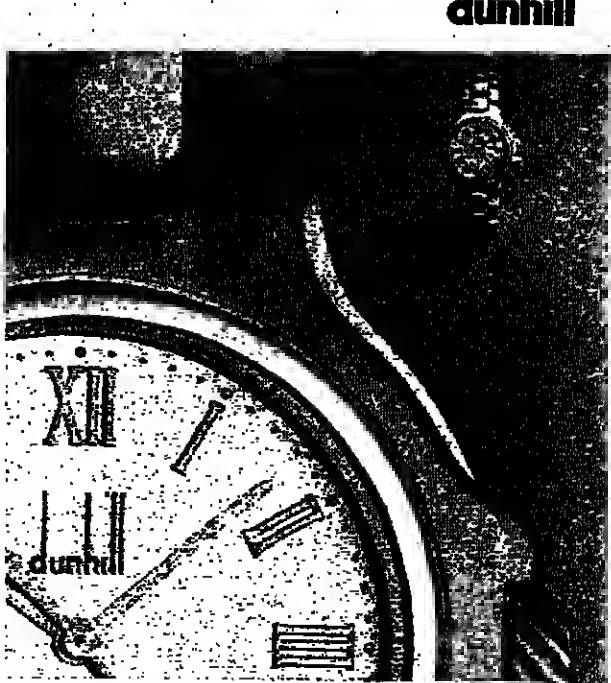
Paul Jarvis hit a rapid unbeaten 42 and then took 3 for 30 as Sussex's bright start to the season continued at Hove, where they beat Hampshire by 49 runs. Despite 65 from John Stephenson Hampshire were never in contention after being set 233.

Kent scrambled to a four-wicket win off the last ball against Surrey at The Oval. Needing two to win, Mark Ealham hit Ben Hollis for a straight six. Matthew Fleming's 5 for 54 for Kent gave him the Gold Award, and there were half-centuries for Kent's Matthew Walker and Surrey's Alec Stewart.

At Bristol, British Universities went down by 122 runs against Gloucestershire, whose spinner Martyn Ball took 4 for 22. The Tasmanian Shaun Young hit 52 at a run a ball for the Gold Award, while for the students Robin Martin-Jenkins finished with 4 for 57 and wicketkeeper Tim Bailey made 52.

At Trent Bridge Durham are within sight of their first win over a first-class side since 28 July last year thanks to David Boon's third half-century in four innings. When rain stopped play Nottinghamshire were 94 for 3 from 26 overs, needing 232 to win.

Only 10.5 overs were possible in the Roses match at Old Trafford, with Yorkshire 43 without loss, and at Lakenham Chris Adams was unbeaten on 95 as Derbyshire reached 166 for 2 chasing the Minor Counties' 257. The former Derbyshire player Mark Fell made 67 and Richard Dalton 76 off 59 balls. Reports, scoreboard, page 31



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